

Black Bass and Other Fishing in North Carolina

By

A. V. DOCKERY

*"The fisher baits his angle,
The hunter twangs his bow"*

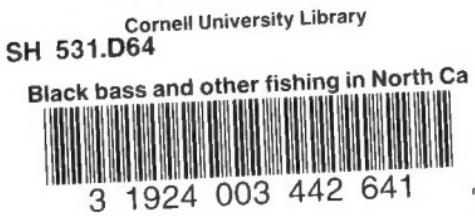
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BLACK BASS

AND OTHER

FISHING IN NORTH CAROLINA

BY

A. V. DOCKERY

Fourteen Years American Consul in Germany,
Portugal and England

RALEIGH

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By

A. V. DOCKERY

PREFACE.

THIS little book is something more than a sketch of Black Bass fishing. It embraces nearly all the different kinds of fish and fishing in North Carolina.

It is written by one who has been an ardent fisherman all his life, and at the same time a modest, yet close student of nature subjects. Many real lies about nature are often more plausible, and readily believed, than some truths.

It has not been the writer's intention to encroach upon the domain of the scientist, especially in the use of technical terms; but only to give his observations in plain, practical language.

This book is not published with the object of pecuniary gain, so much as for the love of the gentle sport of fishing; and with pleasure it is placed before the public.

THE AUTHOR.

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BLACK BASS FISHING

CHAPTER I.

FISHING DISTRICTS.

FOR the purpose of this book I may divide the fishing waters of North Carolina into three sections, which are also more or less the natural geographical divisions. In other words, the first section embraces the territory west of the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and the second section takes in the greater part of the State, extending down to tidewater, where the third section begins and goes on to the ocean.

The principal rivers of the first section, which plowing westward, make their way into the mighty Mississippi either directly or through the Ohio river, are the Kanawha and the Tennessee. The former river, known in North Carolina as New River, has as its tributaries in Wautauga, Ashe and Alleghany counties, several rapid, fine, mountain streams running mostly

through deep, ugly, rocky gorges. The upper waters of the Tennessee within the borders of North Carolina are known as the Holston and the Hiawassee; the branches of the Holston being the trout streams, Watauga and Toe and the French Broad. The Holston making itself up out of several rivers, and going into another river does not hold on to its name for many miles.

There are many other small streams, all making their way westward, but all of the waters of this section are more or less similar in character, full or empty, as the rains fall; and their fish life is also similar. Man should not find fault with nature, but man may wonder why some of these streams between the Blue Ridge and the Alleghany Mountains did not make for the Atlantic Ocean through the Blue Ridge, instead of unanimously bulging through the Alleghany Mountains to help the Mississippi River fill the Gulf of Mexico. But let that pass.

The fish in these rivers are, perhaps, more gamy, but they are not nearly so numerous, nor do they attain such a large size as those east of

the Ridge. They are likewise dissimilar as to species. The most noteworthy fish is the beautiful, speckled trout, but this fish has become scarce since the advent of railroads in proximity to its favorable haunts.

In the middle section we have such great rivers as the Tar, Neuse, Cape Fear and Yadkin.

The latter is big enough and good enough to be step-father to all the others, and 400 miles long, having one of its sources in a spring a mile or so from Blowing Rock, and condescending to empty its waters through another State.

The Tar, Neuse, and Cape Fear rivers however, are strictly North Carolina waters, and the Cape Fear is the longest.

Of course, these rivers have a great many tributaries, large and small, and in time of flood they become mighty powerful.

The waters take on color from the character of the soil through which they flow. Until they reach the sand belt, or the Scuppernong territory, the water is yellowish; but after they strike sand and juniper or cypress it becomes black; and, generally speaking, at this line of demar-

cation between yellow and black water, not only the quantity but the variety of fish life is easily distinguishable. Probably, the proximity to the ocean has much to do with this fact, but it is well known that the character of the soil has a great effect upon the propagation of fishes. Water will permeate through sand much more quickly than through clay, and it therefore, clears sooner and consequently is less destructive of spawn and young fry. Therefore, fish are far more plentiful in black than in yellow waters.

All the waters of this middle section abound in both game and food-fish, and it is really the paradise of the genuine sportsman.

The coast section begins at the tide-head, and this part of the fishy state is recognized, in quantity and variety, not so much as a sportsman's happy land as the home of the fishing industry. So that, practically, one begins in the west with hard labor at fishing for sport, goes through the middle section with genuine love of fishing and ample recompense, to the coast to fish for quantity and dollars.

North Carolina has a dozen sounds that have been dignified with names. Albemarle is the largest body of fresh water, covering more than 400 square miles; while Pamlico Sound has an area of 1,800 square miles, and the waters of several other sounds empty into it.

"Black bass and white perch are very abundant in northeastern North Carolina waters. Currituck Sound, for instance, is filled with them. Albemarle Sound, the water of which is normally quite fresh, also has a great number of these and other fresh water species, as do also the eight rivers entering the sound, particularly the Roanoke and Chowan. This sound, with its tributaries, is an exceedingly important spawning ground, furnishing our waters with many of its most valuable species, such as shad, striped bass, white perch, alewives, etc. Its shad fisheries (the Capehart Fishery, at Avoca, particularly) are the largest in the world. So favorable is this point for the propagation of fishes that the Government has established, near Edenton, N. C., a hatchery for stocking the waters of northeastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia."

To give an idea of the abundance of black bass in the waters of eastern North Carolina, I noted in the latter part of November or early December an item in the *Bayboro (N. C.) Sentinel* recording the fact that a negro of that town had gone out one day, and with his hook and line caught black bass that he sold for more than \$5. I know it to be a fact that in a pond near Norfolk (known as Smith's Lake), on the Norfolk & Southern Railway, are taken bass varying from half a pound to seven or eight pounds in weight; and so numerous are the fishes in the lake that it has been necessary for the owners to put a limit to the number a fisherman is allowed to catch. This limit is twenty-five.

"Matamuskeet Lake, the largest lake in North Carolina (fourteen miles long, seven miles wide), occupying a considerable part of Hyde County, furnishes splendid sport with rod and line. The most highly prized fish there caught is the white perch, which is exceedingly abundant, and reaches a large size; the yellow perch, also abundant, the blue bream, found in large

numbers and ranging next to white perch in popular estimation, the large-mouth black bass, which is present in considerable quantities, also the pike which there attains a very large size, and the pickerel, as well as other varieties. Surrounding Lake Matamuskeet are a group of small lakes, their combined area being less than one-half that of Lake Matamuskeet. All of them are stocked with fish similar to the varieties found in Lake Matamuskeet. The largest of this group is Lake Phelps.

In Craven and Jones counties there is another group of lakes (five in number), known as Great Lake, Long Lake, Lake Ellis, Cat-fish Lake and Little Lake (the largest of these is Great Lake, being 5 miles long and 3 miles wide). In their waters are found great quantities of large-mouth bass, reaching a weight of seven or eight pounds, also perches, pike, cat-fishes, etc."

Ellis Lake is especially noted for the numerous and large black bass which it contains. The lake is very shallow, and the fish usually has to fight it out running instead of diving downwards.

In the same section there is Scuppernong, Black, Bartrams and White lakes which afford fairly good sport. Bass, jack and perch also are abundant in White Lake, Bladen County, and Waccamaw, in Columbus. The cat-fish being privileged passes all boundaries and is found everywhere, even if he has to make use of a passing cloud as a common carrier.

In Eastern North Carolina everything is fishy, men, women and ducks; and sport degenerates into slaughter.

The middle section is well dotted with mill ponds and traversed by fish streams. Within easy reach of Raleigh by the Raleigh and Southport Railroad are Myatts, Rays, Stewarts and Byrds ponds, while the many ponds and fishy streams of Wake, Johnston, Nash, Wilson and Wayne counties are easily accessible from various railroad points. In fact North Carolina is the *fishiest* State in the Union, its climate is more equable than North, West, or South and the people as hospitable as anywhere else on earth.

Probably the most notable fish stream in mid-

land North Carolina is Lumber River. It is a black water river of considerable volume, and is literally full of bass, bream, flyers and pike. But it is especially noted for the sport afforded by the red bream or *red breast* perch, which are numerous, strong and free biters, and weigh up to three pounds. They are not the least offish about taking the bait, but vigorously hide the cork, and tenaciously hold on to the bait. Like the blue bream, these fish will not let go the bait, and they also prefer angle worms—put on lob fashion, i. e.: several worms with heads and tails wriggling. The mouth is small and tough, and after death the fish somewhat resembles the sheepshead, in color. Lumberton, a thriving town, situated on the bank of the river, on the Carolina Central R. R. about 50 miles from Wilmington, is the best point from which to fish this river. Besides there is fine pond fishing anywhere, within 50 miles of the town. There are no better people anywhere than in Robeson County.

Fishing with rod and line is free in all the rivers and creeks, except in the mountain trout

district where it has generally been "posted" or preserved by the owners of adjacent land. Wherever one goes there is pretty sure to be some kind of fishing convenient, at all seasons of the year.

Strictly fresh water fishes are such as *live* in lakes and ponds and rivers. These rarely ever travel far from home. Nearly all the scaly fresh water fishes possess six fins: two pectoral fins, one on each side just back of the head, one and sometimes two dorsal fins on the back, a ventral and an anal fin on the belly and a caudal fin or tail. The sharp, bony substances in the fin are called hard rays, while the others are called soft rays.

When a fish is deprived of its fins, it floats with its abdomen upwards. Therefore the fins act as the motor and steering power.

CHAPTER II.

FISH AND FISHING.

Most fish are caught by the man who uses the simplest, and the least quantity of tackle; but the sportsman does not enjoy the pursuit of quantity.

I use any rod. I prefer, however, a 10-oz., three-piece split bamboo; a limber rod for big fish and a stiff rod for small fish, because I can strike home quicker with a stiff rod and can play the fish better with a limber one.

The water is not open enough to use a reel; but I want plenty of silk line, run through the guides and made fast to the reel seat. I do not like snelled hooks, either on gut or wire, and prefer a medium-size eyeless Limerick hook, nicely knitted on the line or on a six-inch piece of the line; as the quickest catch.

As regards the fishing boat, it should not be over 12 feet in length, with a seat in the stern for running and another seat forward within two feet of the bow to be used when looking for

bass. This position is best for the fisherman where with rod in one hand and a small short paddle in the other he can easily manage boat and rod. It does not matter what material the boat is made of, so that it is light, tight and shaped for easy handling. I do not care for a bait box arranged as a part of the boat. It is well enough in theory, but in practice one will lose more minnows in it than in any other contrivance; the wood becomes soggy, the water stale and odorous; and coming into the box through holes in the bottom is better than deep water. In short the minnows go through a sort of steaming process.

The paddle should be made of light, tough wood like ash, and fashioned so that it can be easily used with one hand; the tip and sides of the blade may be covered with rubber, neatly cemented on, in order to avoid accidental noise as much as possible.

For the same reason the painter should be of rope, no chain or other metal being allowed in the boat.

The best kind of patent tin or other metal

minnow bucket is a poor equipment; unless covered with some material that will deaden the sound. The tin bucket will make a noise every time you look at it, and you are always hitting it when it is not in sight. Furthermore the tin seems to call down the rays of the sun with extraordinary power, necessitating frequent change of water. The strainer is all right, when in the water, if allowed to sink deep into a cool stratum; but it is noisy and the air compartment is worthless, keeping it in warm water at the surface.

I prefer a thick gourd, holding two or three gallons with a crooked neck, and grown so that the bottom is flat, and it will sit up straight. Cut a hole big enough to put a hand through near the handle, and fashion a piece of perforated cork to fit this hole tightly, and you have a bait holder that will make little noise if kicked about, does not become heated and with string can be let down for a supply of heavy fresh water—the life of the minnow. The more soggy the gourd becomes, the tougher and cooler it is; the minnows do not sicken, and you have an ideal bait bucket.

To carry minnows to the pond I use an unglazed earthen jug—size according to quantity of minnows—with large mouth in which a cork is tightly fitted.

It is no paradox, nor a fish story, that bait will live in the same water in such a jug 24 hours without loss.

I have placed three small minnows in a half gallon bottle filled with water, and hermetically sealed it—they kept alive and lively for 38 hours. But I prefer the unglazed, porous jug, whence the lighter gas can escape.

I have, however, in my mind a minnow bucket which I think will beat anything I have seen, or “hearn tell of,” but it shall stay in my mind until it is patented.

A landing net is desirable, but a gaff is never necessary for our size fish, and is noisy.

There are many other things which are unnecessary appendages; yet the best appendix to a true fisherman is a conscience, a pint flask and cup, and a pipe and tobacco.

All I have said above is intended to be educational stuff. Somebody is said to have enun-

ciated the theory that practice makes perfect. It does nothing of the kind. A dullard never can be even a perfect ass. But one can always learn something in fishing.

Of baits again: There are just as many conditions in the gastronomic qualities of a bass's stomach as in that of man, and you need not expect an explanation. A Carolinian will have zest for corn juice, a Georgia cracker for clay; a bass dwelling in sluggish, dirty creeks, overlapped with flags, will prefer a small perch to a lively branch minnow.

De gustibus non est disputandum, which all fishermen understand.

The deer tail bob is a bait that is frequently extolled as a sure killer by fishermen in Eartern Carolina where bass have nothing to do but grow big and get caught by corn whiskey experts.

My friend in Bertie County, all round big head and big foot sportsman, owner of deer hounds and a vocabulary, speaking of the deer tail bait says that while fishing one early morn-

ing from a boat near the bank, his best hound, followed a deer near by, saw the bait on the water, plunged in and got it. The gentleman is a man of veracity, and the dogs as well as the men in that section are liable to curious experiences.

The only automatic combination fisherman and bait that I know of is a gourd about the size of a self-made man's head; with a nicely crooked handle. I had three of these and would take them out into the pond, tie a two foot line to the handle, put hook and minnow on the other end. Turn them loose to be wafted by wind or water until arrested by some fish. They have caught lots of jack for me and some bass. I do not lose sight of the gourds but go on with legitimate fishing. Sometimes I look for the blockaders and one is not in sight. Presently the gourd pops up and prances about too much for a minnow. It continues to be violently disturbed. I give chase with the boat. I get up to it and reach for it but down it goes didapper-like and I wait for its re-appearance. After many attempts I catch it and take the gourd's fish.

It is frolicsome, it is tiresome catching the gourd ; it is unsportsmanlike taking treble knots on a fish, and I do not recommend it, even to a lazy person.

The best fishing water is usually located where there is the least and poorest accommodation—where there are plenty of fleas and bed-bugs, but no beds. The bug does not bother me by biting nor does the flea want my blood ; but the latter gets so numerous and playful on occasions as to spoil a fisherman's temper, which is a pity.

In Portugal where I fished and incidentally represented the United States Government as Consul for three years, the mountain or speckled trout fishing was fine. There I also got most intimate with fleas. The best fish brooks were up in the Sierra Mountains, and the village inns were at the bottom of the mountains. These inns are two-story stone buildings, the bottom being used as stables on the comprehensive idea that the ammonia generated there penetrating to the upper floor inhabited by fleas day and night is good for health. The fleas are

surely not lethargic nor need a suspicion of race suicide be aroused. The only way I could call them down was to use my gum overcoat as a sleeping apparatus. I would keep my fishing socks on, slip my legs into the sleeves, button up tight, put a pillow slip over my head and gently lay down on the floor. The fleas only found my ruse next morning; then, I changed quarters. But this is a small matter with which the patient fisherman has to contend; and he will usually be contented with what he brings to the fishing ground, with earth for a bed, and luck for the stomach's sake.

Bass bite every hour or two and then stop.

Many anglers hook the minnow through the lips and undoubtedly such a method prolongs the life of the minnow, but I prefer to hook it under the dorsal fin, as I believe it can thereby make prettier play. However this is merely a matter of individual taste. The "tail hook" is certainly cruel and tiring.

If the bass seizes crosswise or by the tail he will invariably turn it and pouch it head first; and for this reason I prefer to give him a chance to seize it by the head.

The hook should be struck in the opposite direction to the course the fish is running if possible, or upwards, if the fish dips downwards.

The modern idea of fishing is to use light rods and light lines with small hooks, sizes 1 and 2. These are strong enough and do not kill the minnow. Limerick or Sproat hooks are the best and these should be either black or japanned. The blue and bright hooks are inferior.

Size H braided silk line is preferable, on either an 8 or 10 ounce rod. The "Kingfisher" brand are the best lines manufactured.

As to outfit for fishing the simplest is the best. A pair of easy old shoes, with holes cut in the uppers to let the water out is better than hip rubber boots, and safer. If however one must have a pair of rubber boots those made by the Hannaford Ventilated Boot Co., 79 Milk St., Boston, are recommended.

A handsome "get up" is no more useful in fishing than in hunting. The man and the rod as well as the man and the gun, not the clothes, bring the quarry to bag.

I prefer a medium size bass hook, but the point of the hook should always have 1-4 inch free play from the bait; otherwise it is next to impossible to hook a bass.

If a limber rod is used keep the tip up, and give the fish the bait; as such a rod will automatically take up slack. A loose line at any stage means instant danger.

If a stiff rod is used, tip to the water, keep it there until your fish has played out.

See-saw your fish when you must, but never when there are no obstructions; and keep him away from the boat until you are ready for him with landing net. Do not wait, with landing net, until the fish is brought to the top of the water, but take him as deep as possible.

A flop at the surface has saved the life of many a hooked fish.

Always fish towards bank or reeds, if possible.

Keep your temper in good order, unless the bottle gets broken.

Remember, too, that if the human stomach is composed of asbestos, jiggers, sandstone, acid, cayenne, glue, zinglass, hook worms, alcohol,

collards and rubber; a fish may be expected to take any reasonable lure that is properly placed within his reach.

CHAPTER III.

BLACK BASS FISHING.

THE black bass is widely distributed throughout eastern and middle North Carolina, in the ponds, lakes and rivers. It is locally known as "chub." The large mouth variety is the most abundant, the small mouth being derived from imported stock.

Henshall, a great fisherman, made the prediction twenty years ago that the black bass would eventually become the leading game fish of America. I am sure that it is already true with regard to North Carolina and the neighboring states. It is today our king game fish, our classic in angling language.

Henshall further says: "As to comparison of game qualities, all things being equal and where they inhabit the same waters, there is no difference in game qualities between the large and small mouth bass; one may be more active in its movements while the other is more powerful. Nor is there much difference in habits. As a

general rule the small mouth have small scales and the large mouth have large scales."

The small mouth variety more commonly affects running water with its presence, while the large mouth prefers still, deep water.

In winter, like most other fishes, the bass seeks deep water and lies near the bottom in a partial state of torpidity. In the hottest summer days he also prefers the gloom and solitude of deep holes, under logs or under banks where the water is cooler. Therefore one will infer that the season for catching the bass is somewhat limited, to the early spring before spawning time and in the autumn. The writer believes September and October are the best months for this kind of fishing.

Bass run up to as much as ten pounds weight in this territory, growing larger in states further South; but they are seldom taken with hook and line weighing more than five pounds. Even if the tackle holds securely, there are usually so many snags, and this is where the fish generally lie in pairs, that it is almost impossible to get a big fish out after being hooked.

If one is caught the mate will also be taken, and the place will shortly be occupied by another pair.

The bass is not only choice as to his domicile, but I am sure it is absolutely master of the home. I once caught one in a seine which had swallowed a one pound jack except a little of the tail. After removing the jack a perch was found in it, and to my astonishment a half digested minnow was inside the perch. Thus I had captured four different species telescoped as it were. It may seem incredible, yet is very natural when one considers the voracity of bass, jack and perch. The bass had evidently not taken the jack for food purposes, because its stomach was full, but got mad at the encroachment, opened its mouth and rushed outside the jack. "Butting" is its way of fighting.

The bass is a fighter for life, for food, for home and for fun. It is not the least bit scared of other fish, but develops pugnacity chiefly at the instance of appetite or in the defense of home and progeny. One would imagine that the sharp-tooth jack of equal weight could whip

a bass, but it is otherwise and the jack appears to be aware of it because the jack vacates its domicile alongside a log or lily patch whenever a bass wants to take charge of the place.

We often see a mill pond stocked with bass, jack, perch, mullet, and shiners, and imagine that they dwell together in peace. There is no peace there. All are hungry, and each in its turn is as predatory as a Rockefeller or a Morgan. Nature has so favored their necessities that the spawning season of the different species occurs at different seasons, in order that the egg product may partially supply the constant demand of the appetite. After the hatch of possibly one one-hundredth part of the eggs spawned, comes into horse-play that everlasting pursuit of the young and feeble.

The jack or pike spawns in February when eggs are in great demand, and all the other species are rampant customers. A little later the mullet does its stunt in the same line of business—furnishing food for the inhabitants of water and land. The bass establishes its plantation in shallow water on the ground or on a flat

top stump or log under water in the month of May. A little later the perch acts its part near the shore, and so on around the cycle.

The nest is guarded against intrusion by one of the owners, but it avails little, for while our bass has savagely sallied forth in pursuit of a would be burglar other fishes slip in and get a mess of food—eggs or fry. After the young have got a start in life, which is very early, it is a case of devil take the hindmost, and, human-like, the strong overcome the weak.

A female bass will deposit about 15,000 eggs, which hatch in two weeks, the young fry grow very fast, reaching 10 inches at 2 years; and maturing at 3 years old. Afterwards they grow at the rate of a pound a year until the maximum weight is attained. A ten pound fish ought to be 26 inches long, with a girth of 19 inches.

The bass spawns, “beds,” earlier in mill ponds than in rivers, because, perhaps, the water being stationary it takes in a store of the sun’s heat sooner than running streams. Bass are more plentiful in near-the-sea ponds where the water is not so fresh, but they are not so

game as in the mill ponds in the interior; and not so full of fight even there as in the midland streams.

All fish may not be cannibals, but the bass certainly is one, for it will take a small one of its own species as readily as if it was ignorant.

Fish are more weather-wise than men. They know 12 hours ahead of the weather man when there will be rain or east wind, and on the prospect of rain washing into the water a plentiful supply of fresh victuals they keep "fast" against the baited hook.

They do not possess such an acute sense of hearing as of sight and feeling, or touch. They will not bite during a thunder storm, not because of the noise but on account of feeling the jar in the water more sensitively. Silence, however, is always desirable and often necessary in bass fishing. Unlike the pike which is inquisitive about noise or the composition of any moving attraction, the bass is wary beyond reason and methodical in this distemper. Curiosity plays no part in his *modus vivendi*. Strictly game fish look upward for "grub," and that

is about the only function in fish life; while other kinds look down, smell of, feel of, and feed near the ground.

The condition of the water has much to do with success in bass fishing; whether it is in flood or ebb, too fresh or too hot—it cannot be too cold in the season—too muddy for the fish to see the bait or so clear the angler can be easily seen. In short a dry season and low water makes fish hungry.

As to bait, a bass will take almost any living thing when in the mood, and yet it is often so fanciful that it will take nothing when it really ought to be hungry.

The moon and the weather may have more or less to do with the feeding time, but I never recognized the authority of the moon; preferring to believe that the condition of the stomach of the fish regulated his relish for food.

Aristophanes called the bass the wisest of fishes, and said that its only weakness was its stomach. Man is not very dissimilar in this respect.

Al Fairbrother, an authority in "Every-

thing," says "the hungry man who puts in all his time fishing, and never stops to fry a pan full of 'em is certainly voted a fool," wherein Al shows that he is no judge of a true fisherman.

One must be born a bass fisherman, he cannot be taught the art by another person, but must acquire it by patient practical experience. Nor can he succeed, however expert he may become, unless he learns the water thoroughly; that is the location of every log, stump, hollow bank or lilly patch where bass feel at home, and the depth of the water. The same vexatious experience will be required to know when to strike and how to strike, how to guide your fish away from obstructions, how to keep it under water, when to turn it, and when it has surrendered.

Give the fish a second wind as some sportsmen do for the fun, and it will cut up more devilment than before and very likely not come into the creel.

No bait is so natural nor so attractive as the lively round minnow from a rocky branch. Crawfish, frogs, lizards, and beetles are not unwelcome food, but they are less attractive to

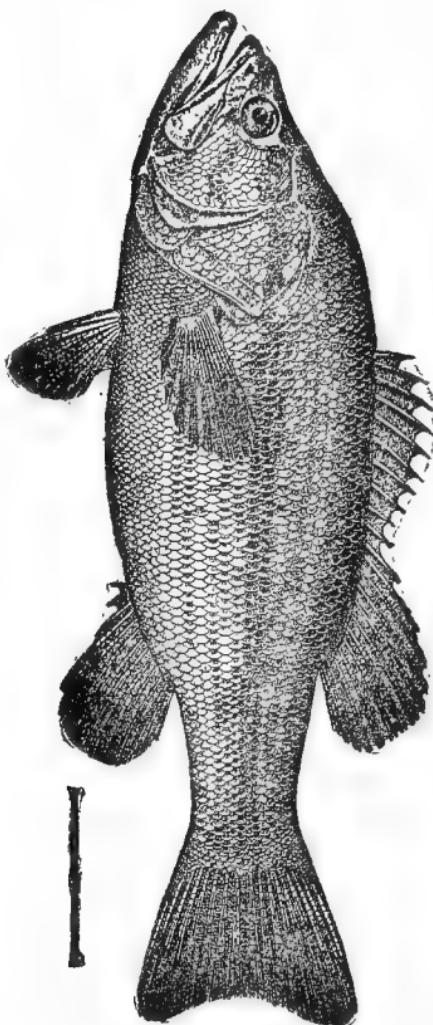
the eye and too tiresome for the stomach to handle. When the bass is in the "bed" spawning, the fisherman for meat often takes it with a lizard, but the bass, in defending the nest, swallows the lizard as the queckest and safest plan, not for his stomach's sake.

The various artificial baits, spinning and bobbing and skittering are good enough makeshifts to use in educated waters but the North Carolina bass has not become accustomed to their use, and take little notice of such objects. However, these fish may be "onto" the deception. A great lob of wriggling angle worms is a killing bait for all big mouth fishes.

The fisherman has a great many tribulations and if he loses his temper it makes about the same difference as in any other pursuit. After he has got the water, the wind, the bait, and the symptoms in his favor, he may get the fish into the basket. The sportsman is satisfied anyhow.

The true science, piscatorial, is occupation without ostentation, fun without fury, patience without glory; a desire for nothing better nor fear of anything worse---an existence in vacuum.

Large Mouth Black Bass.



CHAPTER IV.

MIDLAND BLACK BASS FISHING.

"INCH for inch and pound for pound the bass is the gamest fish that swims.—(Henshall.)

There are now very few good bass ponds within fifty miles of Raleigh. Some of the best have been allowed to go down with the breaking of dams, while other good ponds have been fished dry without any effort being made to restock them. The owners of all ponds have generally acted generously toward fishermen, and the kindness has never been wilfully abused by any true disciple of Walton. Yet their patience has often been overtaxed by the wanton kind of people.

Until two years ago, Hunnicut's pond, in Harnett County, about 25 miles from Raleigh, was full of bass, jack and perch; but the water had to be turned out to fix the dam, and it is not yet ripe for fishing. It is situated on Black River, which rises near Angier and empties into the Cape Fear River. This is the only

pond, with a dam in good order, that interferes with the water in its course to the sea ; and game blue bream up to a pound in weight are plentiful, in June, at the mill tail, only a few getting up into the pond. This is the fishiest stream in middle North Carolina.

I had trouble with a seven-pound bass in this pond several years ago. I struck him in the midst of a bunch of logs about twenty feet from the bank, where the water was seven feet deep. It was an ideal place; the logs two or more feet under water, and the fish—that fish—always there and customarily hungry, so that I had no difficulty in enticing him to take a medium sized minnow.

My heart was glad. I had no animosity against game fish. I would rather one would whip me, than eat him. I buy—do not sell—I fish for sport. This time I got my fish hard hooked, but could not clear the logs and he soon succeeded in wrapping himself around a projecting branch deep in water, and got so fast to it that I could not budge him nor would he take up the slack line. In a little while he be-

gan to cut up again, and the line parted, having been see-sawed off, a foot below the cork. I knew it was no use trying any more that day. A week afterwards I found him again with nearly the same result, but I worked differently. As soon as he had hung under, and the line was taut and fast, I got out of the boat and went down to the catch, but he had torn off and the hook was hitched to the log. Several days afterwards I hit him again. This time I got him safely over and clear of logs, and while my boy paddled into the open, I felt so sure I had my fish that I neglected to put the tip of the rod to the water, and while playing him the third time around the boat he fairly rose out of the water, and shook my hook out of his mouth much after the way a mean mule would discharge a bit. I was heart broken, did some muttering for a few minutes; and went home. To this day I can see the defiant countenance of that fish, in the air, jerking his head from side to side.

For weeks I pursued him, but never struck him—he either took the minnow off or threw it out. A lady caught him, the fish having

swallowed the bait and got hooked in the maw. Even then the line broke, and the fish dropped into the boat. He weighed 7 1-4 pounds, and this is why I know he was a seven-pounder.

I always feared and watched a two-pounder, which size I regard as the most apt jumpers, and this is the crucial point with a bass on the hook; and about the only time an expert angler may lose the fish. Big fish are more apt to stay in the water or sulk.

Hook and line fishing has always been free at Hunnicut's, and the owners are very clever people; but they naturally expect fairly decent behavior around the premises.

Starting near the source of Black River is Black Creek another good fish stream which courses to the sea by way of Neuse River. On this creek is Panther Branch Fishing Club's pond, alias Myatt's pond, eighteen miles from Raleigh, and everybody can fish in it who is a member of the club. This is today the best stocked pond within 50 miles of Raleigh. It has been carefully re-stocked with several species of fish, and protected as it should be.

I have fished this pond several times, and have had both kinds of luck. I caught three bream below the dam one day, but never got one in the pond; and I do not think they patronize this tributary of the Neuse to any extent.

I do not know how Taylor's pond, over in Nash, is now, but I spent a week there some years ago and the fishing was not good. It is on Moccasin Creek, a good fishing stream by reputation.

Richardson-Heely-Strickland pond, on Buffalo, over in Johnston, twenty miles from Raleigh, is a long, narrow, deep pond, full of fish; but the bass are so wise as to be hard to come at.

There are plenty of them and very big ones but they are too particular about the method of feeding. I know I never caught one there, and I have heard other fishermen admit the same thing. Yet I have had rare luck with speckled perch, large hard biters, not white perch; and the "red belly" perch fishing there is fine in June and July. I did not meet any jack nor red fins at this place. The fishing is free, and good boats can be hired by the day

for the moderate sum of 25 cents. In fact this is the only free water fishing of any value that I know of within fifty miles of my starting point.

Penny's or Yates' pond, five miles out, has some very big university educated bass which are apt to stay there; but the fishing is otherwise not good. Gourd-seed perch and shad roaches or shiners are plentiful. The pond has been really fished to death and restocking has been sedulously avoided.

As I intimated, other good ponds have been permitted to go uncared for, or else depleted through the vandalism of nonsportmen. It is a hard matter to own a mill pond where the people in the vicinity feel they have a right to catch a living out of it.

I have never cared much for river fishing, and less for creek fishing. First of all I want the water to stay still, while I may not expect the fish to do so, and I am "afeard" of snakes on land but not on water, unless I take pe-ru-na.

There ought to be good fishing at Milburnie pond, on Neuse River. There was good fishing

until the power company effectually blocked the fish away by a new dam across the river. But, at best, the fishing is uncertain. With a clear sky and clean water, the flood and mud may come down on one in a few hours from fifty miles up stream.

As practically all the fish put into Neuse River by the United States Fish Commission are quarantined below the dam at Milburnie, few get up into the pond, except in time of big flood.

The red stuff dumped in Walnut Creek may not kill people, but it drives fish out of the creek, and that nearby creek is spoiled for fishing purposes. Crabtree, another handy stream, in somebody else's boyhood days is said to have been partly full of fish, but I fear it is too frequently assaulted with dynamite.

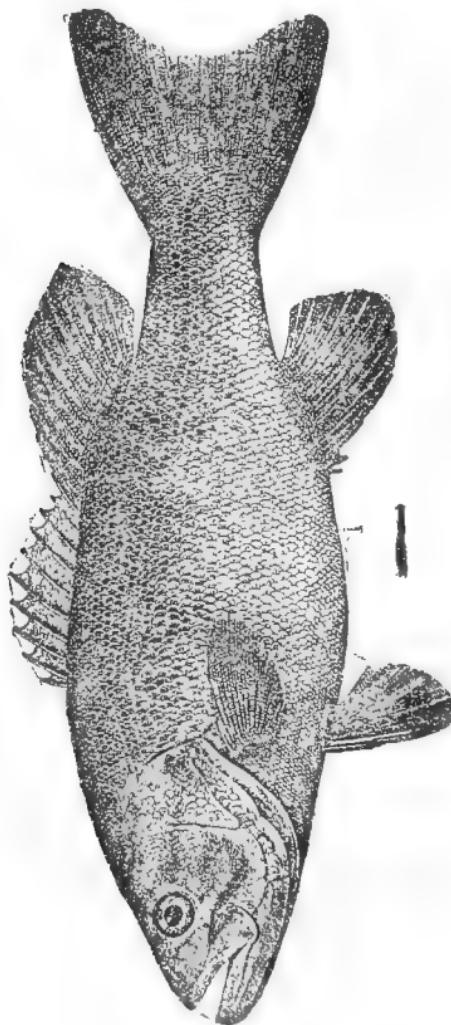
As a rule, black waters hold more fish than those which spring from red clay soils. It is not difficult to account for the difference. Black mud is more easily disintegrated, and the water, therefore, clears more quickly; while red mud sticks to egg and young fry.

Fish have many enemies besides man and their own species, and while there is no suicidal mania, yet there is an enormously developed race issue which is impelled by the instinct of the stomach and guided by the power of mouth, fin, and tail.

The turtle is a very bad neighbor. His mouth is big, his eyes are open and his stomach is capacious. A fish loves to be rubbed better than a fat man in a Turkish bath, probably because he wishes to get rid of some of the yellow fever germs left on him by a mosquito or a German scientist. Scratching tickles him to a stand-still. The turtle locates him under a log and wants to share his society. He takes cognizance of the latitude and longitude, shuts his eyes, moves and allows himself to feel like a log alongside of the fish, until his muzzle gets into position; when one snap fixes the destiny of the fish until it thunders.

The terrapin only attacks the sick or the netted fish—his head being no battleship.

The otter and the mink are both gross feeders and great fishers. Their eyes are built for



Small Mouthed Black Bass.

under water service, and, taking in a supply of air, they can stay under water a long time and do much slaughter.

All water snakes are expert fishers, but they run great risks, and occasionally make the mistake of trying to swallow a fish tail first, and sometimes find themselves up against a sleeping turtle who had just as soon compliment his stomach with snake as fish.

Like man; from the air, the water and the earth, fish attract enemies.

CHAPTER V.

BASS FISHING ON THE COAST.

HAVING spent last Sunday fishing, through the News and Observer, for the dark spotted trout, in the brooks between the Blue Ridge and Alleghany mountains of North Carolina, I propose to jump clear of the middle section of the State, and get back to my favorite game fish, the black bass, (chub) in his favorite haunts, along the fringe of waters of the coast line, at the tidal limit.

The fresh water lakes, ponds, and creeks of this section abound in bass of the largest size. In fact all the waters down east are so full of fish that it becomes a matter of slaughter, and therefore toil of brain as well as muscle in catching them. What sort of sport is that which fills a boat with fish in a few hours?

Besides, the fish in those waters are not so full of fight as those in Middle Carolina. I know I would rather catch one bass up State, that has never got a whiff of salt water air than

a boat load of Chowan River sluggards, hungry enough to be sure, to grab at any reasonable bait, but too lazy to do much else than sulk—doglike—will snarl over a bone but will not play tag with it.

In the vicinity of Wilmington there is some fairly good big bass fishing. Take a boat at Wilmington, go up North East River with the tide to the mouth of Prince George Creek; and fish it up to Castle Hayne, which is as far as a boat can pass. This is an ideal still-fishing creek and reminds one of the gloomy everglades of Robeson and Bladen counties. The water is jet black, deep nearly everywhere, and the banks are bordered far out into the water with a thick mass of long evergreen weeds—which sometimes are uprooted by strong wind and unusual tides and thereafter form floating islands, wafted for years up and down the creek by wind and tide. A boat cannot make headway over these floating islands, but must go around or push them aside. An immense cypress swamp borders the Castle Hayne side of the creek, extending to the North East River, probably two

miles wide. In this swamp the alligator fearlessly makes his home the year round; there are probably one hundred and sixty thousand squirrels, and such a large colony of raccoons that the farmers along the edge have to kill them with strychnine to protect the corn.

There are some deer, which were formerly hunted until it was found that alligators were as fond of dog meat as of hog meat. The alligators are as harmless to man, as the bear, which also dwell there; and will avoid man's acquaintance if given an opportunity. One day while fishing in the creek in company with two other persons, I saw one coming out of the weedy morass with his mouth ajar; and just as he made clear water I emptied a load of squirrel shot into his head. To my surprise he emptied a big water rattler out of his mouth, and was dead, and about to sink; but we got him into the boat and laid him out, friendly like, on his back in the bottom. In about ten minutes, after we had quietly settled down to fishing, he waked up, waked us up too, and wanted to get out. We could not let him, however, much as we

wanted to do so. I jumped upon the bow thwart and with rod turned him to the middle thwart man, who hit him with a gun and passed him to the man who had taken his station already high up on the stern seat and he returned the 'gator with a vicious blow of his paddle. Thus we had it for a few very long minutes, until the varmint concluded to die again. There was no time to think about shooting—the butt of the gun was more handy. Had the boat sunk we would very shortly have been in Jerusalem, because the best swimmer could not have made headway through the morass of weeds which for hundreds of yards lined both banks of the stream. We carried that alligator home all right, but we never gave him up for dead; and considered ourselves somewhat of heroes, since had the battle gone against us, three lives would have been lost, equal to an average Spanish-American war battle in casualty, although less costly.

I did not sufficiently enjoy that fishing trip to repeat it.

But the bass fishing in Morton's pond is prob-

ably the finest in this State. It is situated at the head of tide-water on a small creek, eight miles from Havelock, a station on the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad, whence conveyance may be obtained at reasonable rates. The Wayside Inn managed by the owner of the pond affords neat lodging and substantial grub at very reasonable rates. No charge is made for fishing, nor for boats, although the supply of the latter is inadequate.

The pond covers an area of 300 acres, and probably half of this is occupied by cypress trees; afford shade, refuge, and feeding ground for the fish. These trees surround the pond, extending 50 yards or more into the water which is from 3 to 6 feet deep—gradually deepening to as much as 40 feet in the middle of the pond.

Bass are plentiful and run to a very large size; all kinds of perch, including the long, barred; raccoon perch, are likewise plentiful but the speckled perch is most frequently met with.

There are also some jack, but nobody thinks

of fooling with a fool jack where bass are so plentiful.

The only drawback to the fishing is perhaps bait, but this equally applies to all coast line fishing. One has therefore to fall back on small perch for bait, which are easily obtained at the pond, and these bass will readily take the perch and make the best of conditions.

Three Raleigh friends of mine went to this pond recently for an outing, with only a gallon and a half, from this prohibition town, which they made do them for two days. In those two days they caught 39 bass, besides a job lot of perches that their conscience would not permit to be estimated.

While under ordinary circumstances I might doubt some of the remarks of these men, yet I am constrained to believe that they told the truth about catching 39 chub. I wish, however, that they had made it even 40.

Eleven of the bass weighed from 5 1-2 to 7 3-4 pounds, bully big fish; and the others from 3 to 5 pounds each. They were caught with

ordinary stiff rods 15 feet long, and about the same length of line. The fish being chiefly found near the trees there was no room for reel and line play; nor was any trolling done.

One big chub while being slowly towed alongside the boat, with plenty of slack line, made a sudden dash, secured a good size perch which was inquisitive; and brought him to the boat. This is easily believable. A fool jack would venture to jump into the boat after bait.

The head of the 7 3-4 pound chub, caught by this bunch of galoots was exhibited in Johnson's drug store; and bore every evidence of bigness. But the biggest fish, a 13 pounder, caught by the most pious looking cuss in the gang, got away; yet it has been much talked about. It seems that in one of his mad sorties for liberty, apart from equality and fraternity, he butted against a cypress butt, grunted, and tore himself from the hook.

I am glad Nanny lost that fish, because it saves him so much veracity for another time.

In order to protect one's veracity, it is well to remember that a fish is never as large as it

looks to be, and in the water it is certainly twice as large as on land. Everybody will remember that the biggest fish always gets away.

In some localities and generally in South Carolina the bass is commonly called trout.

A friend has sent me a sketch of a bass caught in Moore Pond, Franklin County, which it is claimed weighed 8 1-2 pounds. This fish was 22 1-2 inches long with a depth of 7 1-4 inches. This pond has long been celebrated for its big bass, and it has not been overfished.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ROCK BASS: RED EYE.

THE red eye, or rock bass, is the gamest fish I have ever taken in North Carolina. I really am not sure what is the proper name for it. It is commonly known here as the red eye, but if the eye of any other fish looks red the angler is sure he has caught a red eye. However, I believe it is the genuine rock bass described in the U. S. Directory, 1907, as rock bass, or red eye. It is very scarce in our waters. I have never caught more than three of them, which I took while fishing with minnow for bass, at Milburnie, in 1893. I was wading among the falls when I struck something that I took to be a bass, and it gave me an unusually long, strong fight. I brought it to my surcingle, unhitched and took him to the bank, where my friend, John Pugh Haywood, an ex-member of Worth's fish hatchery, was piddling with catfish. I said nothing about the fish, nor noted any peculiarity, but baited quickly and again waded to my hole in

the water, where it was mixed with rocks, for another bass. One bit my minnow the instant it touched the water, and for a time struggled bravely, but I was master. Carrying it to the bank, I looked around for the other fish—a bass as I supposed—but could not find it. A fish was there, to be sure, but it had completely changed color from the sheeny green of life to the bars of a sheepshead in death. Haywood then told me it was a red eye, the gamest fish in the river. I had never heard of such a thing as a red eye except when it was sorely inflamed.

And yet this was my whilom bass. I baited and started out again. Looking back I saw Haywood with shoes and breeches off, rod and ammunition in hand, following hot and hasty. He had become excited. I got another fish at the same place, and that took in the school. There was no more play. Two of them weighed a little over two pounds a piece and the other was smaller. I was proud of my catch.

Then I went to work to study the liars (authorities) on fish lore to learn something useful about the red eye of the fish tribe. I am yet a

student. St. Peter, who was a net fisherman, does not epistle on the red eye, and Isaac Walton was only a ground-bait fisherman.

“The Fishes of North Carolina” gives a correct personal description of my fish except that it does not mention the color transformation after death and confines its habitat to the French Broad River and tributaries; but it says that a specimen in the Museum caught near Raleigh in 1892, was probably an introduced example. I sincerely hope other and numerous examples will be introduced, because I have never found another one of these fish.

It is not only a free biter and vigorous fighter, but the flesh is white, firm and of excellent flavor. I do not believe, however, with the authority aforesaid, that it is a desirable fish for ponds, because wherever found in the river, it is located among rocks in the swiftest water—a rock bass.

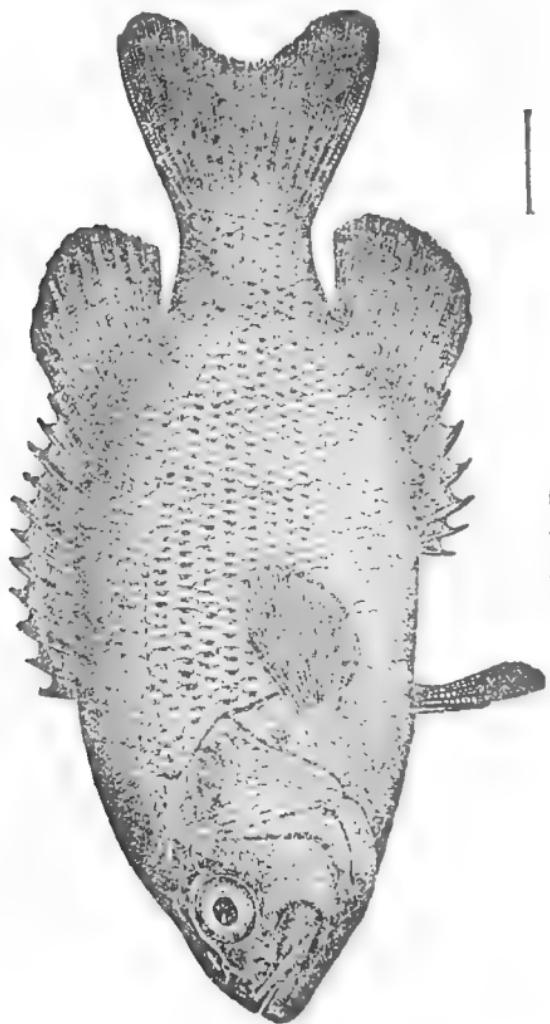
We see nothing of this fish up country, except in spring, when it appears in very small schools about the time dogwood trees are in blossom; therefore, fresh water rock bass or not,

I feel safe in asserting that it is at least migratory in its habits. It has been found in the Roanoke, Tar, Neuse and Cape Fear, and the tributaries of these rivers.

Thanks to the public spirit and energetic action of the Audubon Society, we have in North Carolina quite a comprehensive and efficient system of game protection; but our midland fish interest has been almost entirely neglected. Fish may be taken in and out of season, and in any quantity, without violating any statute law. The only measurable protection is the prohibition of seining a few streams in certain localities and also in the use of certain kinds of nets in some of the tide water counties.

Ponds and lakes for the most part being private property, the fishing rights thereto are of course at the will of the owner. Fish are not sufficiently plentiful to encourage a person to become a hog fisherman, however much the inclination may be that way.

Undoubtedly there should be a little more education of the general public on the importance of the preservation of our fishes and it is



Rock Bass.

earnestly hoped that the next Legislature will enact a law that will at least make such close seasons as will protect all game fish as well as strictly food fishes from destruction during the spawning period. No owner of private water can reasonably object, since it is to his advantage as well as to the people generally. Such a law would be more easily enforced than a game law, because the temptation to violate it is less.

A fisherman ought certainly to be able to swim. It is not only a desirable, but almost a necessary accomplishment. It is more easily learned than dancing, and it does not require the aid of a fiddler, nor is grace such an important part. It is also nice to be able to float, whereby one rests himself after swimming. It is not so easy to learn as swimming and necessitates the possession of a lung capacity equal to that of a bull frog. I can float for hours without exertion. I do not know how I learned the art.

Passing a mill pond one Sunday down in Harnett County along the dirt dam which was used as a public road, I saw half a dozen young

fellows summersaulting from a spring-board and swimming. They invited me to join them, and without much ado, without even removing hat and shoes, I tumbled off the spring-board and swam amongst them for awhile. Then turning on my back, crossing my arms over my chest and closing my eyes, I floated for awhile. I could not hear anything because my ears were under water. When I opened my eyes I saw all those fellow a hundred yards down the road with their clothes in their arms running as if for life. They told me afterwards that they thought I was a corpse.

The red eye is more chunky than the black bass, and probably on that account it cannot make such a prolonged fight. It has 11 dorsal spines and 6 or 7 anal spines whereas the bass has 7 of the former and only two small anal spines.

Noah Webster says the red eye is a genus of the carp family, but this Noah was not a waterman.

Twenty years ago this fine game fish is said to have been abundant in the Neuse about Mil-

burnie and also in Crabtree Creek, near Raleigh, but for some unaccountable reason it has become so scarce in recent years that it is not sought after. Indeed it has become almost extinct in these waters. Possibly the habit of going in small schools made it more easy to exterminate them, because if the fisherman once struck such a school he might readily play havoc with it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MOUNTAIN TROUT.

FOREST and stream are nearer to Nature than anything else. I give thanks for having been born in the forest, one hundred miles from a railroad; and having lived in steam—hot water—most of the subsequent period. I have enjoyed that life. I am not satisfied, but I am satisfied with what lot God has permitted me to escape.

In my side-line—politics—I have made a considerable amount of enemies; but I made a few firm friends, such as Conkling, Blaine, Logan, Ransom, and Vance. I escaped the contagion of free silver, free warehouses, free corn cribs, and free love; and when the Republican party miscegenated with the Populist, I took refuge in another domicile.

In the beginning of this chapter of accidents I may as well warn the reader that fishing for trout in the mountains anywhere, is by no manner of means a gay sort of sport; but on the

contrary, it is a very serious and laborious, humbugging proposition. The speckled trout country is very sparingly inhabited and scantily clad with a not very tame people; who, however, when you come up with them, will treat you kindly as they become convinced that you are not looking for their outfits.

We have no char in North Carolina, at least, I have never seen one here. It is a most beautiful, red spotted fish of the salmon genus and is shaped much like our mountain trout. It is also wary and hard to come at; indeed, it affects tarns situated away up in the solitude of forest—bare mountains, where only the caw of crow and scream of eagle make nature seem to be alive, such as the tarns in the beautiful lake district of England.

The rainbow trout, introduced into our sapphire district from the Rocky Mountain country appears to closely resemble the char in shape, marking, and perhaps habit, and I should not wonder if it is the same fish. I know that patience ceases to be an incentive to cuss when one is fishing for char; because I

spent two whole summers in the pursuit and did not get one. Somewhat like the rose, which, to the connoisseur, is to be seen not smelt, the char it to be seen, not felt.

When young it may wind and bound up stream from sea to tarn; but, becoming big and old, it cannot get down hill again to the sea, if it wanted to do so.

But we have a native incumbent of our mountain streams beautiful indeed with its dark spots and comely in its sprightliness; as well as heroically game for a little fellow. He does not get large, scarcely ever exceeding half a pound in weight, but he makes up for lack of bulk by want of lethargy; being alert, spry and voracious he does not necessarily wait for a morsel of food to touch the water, but will jump out and meet the food at least part of the way.

This mountain, or brook trout, has been properly named, for he is almost always a lover of a home in the small mountain streams, high up, where the water is cold; amidst laurel thickets, rocks, rattle snakes, pools and swirls; out of sight of man and other beast.

There is no more palatable fish anywhere than the little dainty of the cold mountain water, but it has become so scarce (it always was difficult to get at) that fishing for them is a very unsatisfactory sport.

My personal observation of the speckled trout only extends, so far as this State is concerned, to the head-waters of the New and Watauga rivers in the Blowing Rock section; where I whiled away one summer in the pursuit, got a little sport and a plenty of toil.

Not seeking health or society, I did not dwell at the Rock, but went up into the artless hills and meadows; away from the haunts of men and petticoats, to the habitat of the never weary trout.

My equipment consisted of an eight ounce bamboo rod, appropriate line and leader, a book of flies, suitable for the month, the water and the sky, a box of live grass-hoppers, and a boy to "tote" the lunch et cetera.

Starting about sunrise I would make for the highest point of the stream, scramble through the laurel thicket down to the water; and fix for

a day's hard work, but there was enough fun connected with it to compensate for the time lost in work. Into the icy cold water I go wading down stream, for it is safer falling down stream than up stream, just as one hurts himself more falling up stairs; and the exertion is not so great. The water keeps cold, and I frequently get out on a boulder, rub my feet and legs, call the boy, complain about the cold, lighten the load of et ceteras and plunge into the stream again. Picking out likely places for fish I cast my flies, and if I miss hanging to a laurel bush and drop within ten feet of a beauty, I am pretty sure to get a rise, tolerably sure to make a miss, and once in a year or two get a fish. But years amount to nothing in this mountain trout business, among a dreary people whose money crop consists in apples, cabbages and scenery—apples for distilling and dilluting the head with, cabbages for filling and annoying the appendix with, and scenery for disturbing and wearying the heel with.

If you just once see your cast gently dropping to the objective spot, see a 1-8 pounder leap out,

hit your fly a foot above the water, then hit him, bringing him after a zig-zag, and jumping fight, to creel, you feel as if you had the best sort of religion ; and call on the et cetera boy for some more nourishment.

But your eye has got to be keen enough to see when the trout takes the fly into his mouth and you must strike then, if not sooner, or you lose him. Likewise, when the fly is on the water trickling down stream (it must always be kept on the move), you ought to strike at every ripple you see on the water within a foot of your fly. Do not wait for the fish to be fool enough to hook himself, for, unlike a catfish, he will only do this accidentally. If they are not hungry for flies, try small grasshoppers, and let your line reel them down stream out of sight ; and it will prove a killing bait, although rather unsportsmanlike proceeding.

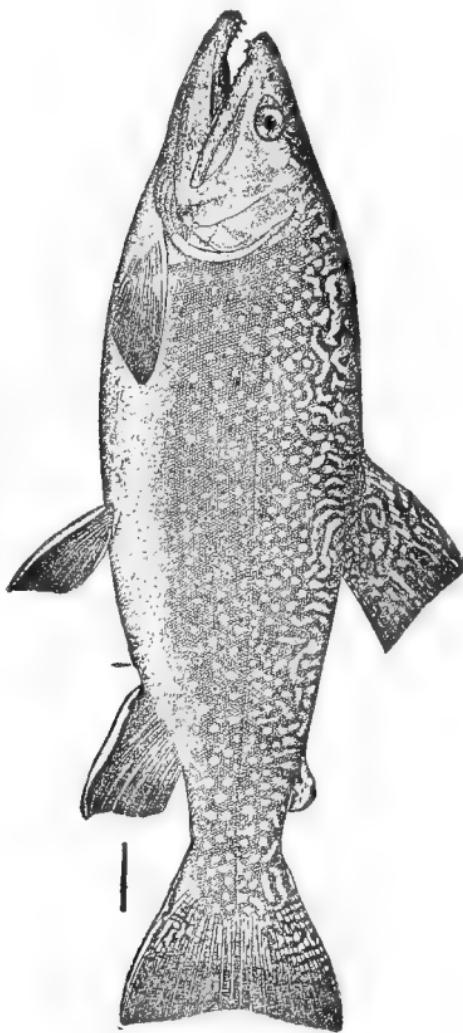
Fish on down stream until a quarter past one o'clock, then give your stomach some play and yourself an hour's rest. Rejuvenate yourself and tumble down stream again until dark or

sooner, and go home tired and lucky if you have creeled twenty-six beauties averaging two ounces each.

For this kind of sport a pair of shoes is absolutely the only article of clothing that is necessary. Nobody will see you, nor would it matter in that Adam and Eve country; and you will get warm after freezing half an hour. Wading boots are no good at all, because you are likely to drop neck-deep at any moment. Were it possible, it would be better to have your shins on behind, as the rocks are very hard, and you will likely have a calf in front of your leg next morning.

The best catch I ever made was sixty-five fish, and half a pound was the biggest in the bunch; but, by the way, he was caught by the man who acted as my guide. I did not take him along another time, as I thought, I might have caught that fish myself.

Brook Trout.



“The brook trout is emphatically a cold water fish, thriving best in clear mountain streams with a maximum temperature of 50 deg. F., although in some places it flourishes in short coastal rivers and runs to salt water in winter. Its food consists largely of insects, worms and crustaceans. While the species reaches a length of eighteen to twenty-four inches, in North Carolina it is of comparatively small size.

“The spawning time is in autumn, and the spawning beds are shallow places near the banks of streams. The female makes a kind of nest in the gravel, and guards the eggs during incubation. The eggs average about .15 inch in diameter, and the number laid varies from a few hundred to several thousand, depending on the size of the parent. The hatching period is about fifty days in water of fifty degrees temperature.”

FISHING.

A youth beside the water sits,
The noonday sun is warmly beaming;
His nose and neck are turkey red,
His eye with radiant hope is gleaming.
He watches close the bobbing cork
Advance upon the tiny billows;
A jerk, and a swish, and high above
He lands a sucker in the willows.
That's fishing.

A fair maid trips the tennis court,
A dozen eyes admire her going;
Her black-and-yellow hat band burns
A hole through the sunset's glowing;
She drives the ball across the net
And into hearts consumed with wishing
She drives a dart from Cupid's bow,
She'll land a sucker, too.
She's fishing.

So, whether the game be fish or men,
The bait be kisses, worms or blushes
The place at home by sunny pool,
Or tennis ground at evening hushes,
'Tis the old game the serpent played
With Mother Eve in Eden's bowers,
And Adam's sons and daughters all
Will love the sport to time's last hours.
That's fishing.

—*The Asian.*

CHAPTER VIII.

WORM FISHING FOR BROOK TROUT.*

BY LOUIS RHEAD.

ONE out of every twenty brook trout anglers uses the fly; the rest fish with worms. Only one of the nineteen is an experienced worm fisherman; the remaining ones are what I shall term "plumpers," who only make a practice of fishing during a short vacation in the summer. It is to these plumpers (so called because they only know how to plump a worm into the water and yank a trout back again) that I wish to present a few ideas whereby they may get some real sport, instead of being merely butchers intent only on slaughter.

They soon get to know by experience that brook trout, even when fully gorged, cannot resist a live, wriggling worm. Therefore, it is only an idiot who fails to land them. There is infinitely more shame than pride in having a

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photograph taken by the side of a long string of trout—often the greater part being little above the size allowed by law to be taken. I advocate giving the fish a fair show and getting some real sport out of the game. Legitimate worm fishing is an art easily learned, giving ample pleasure and playing to the angler.

In the small, swift-running brooks that tumble over rocks and sunken tree trunks, where the water swirls in foamy circles, the tackle should be of the lightest and daintiest description—a four-ounce, eight-foot rod that is not too long and getting everlastingly entangled overhead; that is easy to guide through brambles and laurel bushes—such a rod is invaluable. Have the line to match—the thinnest and lightest in weight; also have the reel very small, with a stiff click to retard any rushes under low branches or fallen logs. Trout always dart off, if possible, to hiding places where it is difficult to dislodge or get at them. The best leader for this fishing should be very fine indeed, and only three feet long, as it often happens that the tip cannot be raised because of overhanging

branches, and a long leader cannot be reeled in close enough to get the net under the fish. A willow net with rubber ring to fit on the wrist is advisable; especially so when the fish run to a good size, of from ten to fifteen inches, for it often happens that when such a fish is hooked there is no place in sight where one can lead him out of the water on to the beach.

The hooks cannot be too small, and a liberal number should be supplied, and tied to a fine snell of the same thickness as the leader. This completes the outfit. It is a great mistake to use split shot to sink the worm. The bait should at all times float on the surface like a fly. Trout always rise to a worm (and will never follow it to the bed of the brook, even in deep water), providing the angler is out of sight.

In baiting the hook never put on a great bunch of three or four worms; it is not half as effective as a small single worm. With a big bunch some time must elapse before the fish swallows it, and then if a small fish is landed he has to be killed to extract the hook. Large fish will swim around a bunch of worms as if

doubtful about touching it, because in nature no such thing happens, whereas a single worm only half impaled on the hook with the tail wriggling around arouses an instant desire to seize it quickly. To properly hook a worm it should be worked right over the hook until it is entirely covered. That will nearly insure the barb's piercing the lips instead of the hook being swallowed.

Rebait every time a fish is caught, oftener if necessary. Never have ragged parts left on the hook. All parts of the dead worms should be removed. Have nothing on the hook but the single live worm, with one-third wriggling. Most expert bait anglers scour their worms, always having a large supply on hand in a good-sized tin can, having one-fourth filled up with a sandy soil, and on top lay some damp moss, soaked well with milk and a few pieces of bread. In a few days the worms will harden and become lighter in color. When ready to start have the bait box wrapped round the waist and a part of the worms put in the box. Now that all is ready we will make our way toward the stream

or mountain brook not more than twelve feet wide, nor more than a foot and a half deep, except in the pools made by logs and rocks. Step lightly into the water and from the middle of the brook cast the worm gently, without a splash, to the right bank, having the line the same length as the rod. Work the bait in a semicircle to the left bank. If no fish takes it reel out another six feet of line, thus covering a further distance, and draw it slowly across to the other side. The force of the water keeps the bait on the surface in sight of the angler. If a fish takes the bait he will rush to the bank as he sees the angler; he will not run up stream.

If the fish is a ten-inch trout slightly check the line, but hold him from going a distance; then turn him and gradually reel until he is near enough to place the net under him. Now rebait with a fresh worm and take a few steps forward and repeat the same movements as before, taking care, however, to use the utmost caution in moving down stream—no floundering about or waving the rod. Let the water carry the bait forward after the side cast is made, and

keep a steady eye on the bait. As you move along, on coming to a tree trunk lying across the brook, which forms a deep pool, lengthen the line (keeping some distance away) and let it run its course. The eddies will carry it just where the trout lies. If he takes it he will surely run under the log and possibly get free, unless a sharp watch is kept on his movements and he is stopped by leading him to shallow water—gradually raising the tip of the rod as the line is reeled in.

Fish, trout especially, love to lie in shady spots, beneath laurel bushes and other impediments that make it difficult for the angler to reach them; and they will seldom let him get nearer than twelve feet, but dart away up stream if possible.

In these small brooks one of the most important things to remember is to keep out of sight. Trout dash away a distance of fifty feet in no time, and it is no use to follow, and the only way is to leave them for another visit later on.

The angler must be on the alert every minute, though no strike is necessary in bait fishing for

brook trout. They firmly hook themselves every time they go at the bait, but the line should instantly be tightened. Then their chances of getting away are reduced to a minimum.

Worming fishing is in many respects the exact opposite of fly fishing. The latter method makes it necessary to keep the nose of the fish above water, whereas worm fishing requires it to be kept under water as far as it is possible.

CHAPTER IX.

PIKE, "JACK," "RED FIN."

I SHALL class this fish as game, although "butcher" would be a more appropriate name, because, if a large one, he will often feed when not hungry nor too lazy, and will sulk when hooked. He is cruel, lazy, foolish, omnivorous; and the most inquisitive fish that swims in fresh water.

They are indiscriminately called jack, but the pike, with us, attains to a weight of seven pounds, whereas the pickerel is evidently a true young pike, but the colors are somewhat lighter.

The red-fin pike is almost a distinct fish, except in manners and customs; is more numerous, rarely ever exceeds a pound and a half in weight, and is a more toothsome fish, greatly resembling our mountain trout in size, beauty and edible quality. It is most appropriately called "red-fin."

Jack will bite more readily in winter than at any other time of the year. I have broken

the ice at the edge of a pond, paddled up the "run" towards the source, and caught them with a piece of red flannel for bait on the coldest sort of day. A small red-fin is a dangerous bass bait, and probably his big kinsman would also take care of him if tempted.

All varieties will readily take artificial bait, in trolling or dibbling, and will greedily attack any live bait, such as small fish, frog, bug, bird or fly. In fact, any moving object will be looked into, whether red rag, white pork, tin cup or painted cork. His fancy requires no tickling with dainty things so long as the object is on the move—he only insists on the delusive pleasure of believing that the bait is alive, and he will rush it. If you have failed to hook him with several kinds of bait, he will occasionally jump into your boat, ostensibly for the purpose of seeing if any other kind of bait is handy.

They are so voracious that it is difficult to fill them, but they are not voracious when playing with your bait, because you never know when to strike him safely. Often, he will take your cork under, bass-like; another time he will

nibble your minnow off, terrapin-like, and then again he will gradually sink the cork, allow it to come to the surface, a few yards away, for an instant and then slowly start under and off—now you know it is a jack, but you do not know whether to strike or wait awhile. It is safer to strike, because he is now in the act of pouching the minnow.

If you have a big minnow on and it is a big jack, not hungry, he will likely take it deep in water and consider it some time before pouching; but how are you to know that it is a big jack? Give him plenty of time and he will notify you—by hanging himself and ringing the bell.

Dibbling for red-fin pike in shallow, clear water of ponds and streams is not sport, but is productive of results; because every one that sees the bait will come to creel, if you use a slender, stiff rod and only eighteen-inch line. Where plentiful, as in Mingo Swamp in Harnett and Johnston, it is an easy turn to catch a breakfast of these dainty fish.

There is a black water swamp in Robeson and

Bladen counties which obtained notoriety from the fact of its having for a long time harbored the Henry Berry Lowrey gang of robbers and murderers. It is a mile or more in width, and a considerable stream sluggishly meanders its way through the more than forty mile length of the swamp, that abounds in big jack, big chub, fliers and blue bream. The swamp is densely wooded with cypress, and the young trees grow so thickly that man cannot make his way without the aid of an axe. The stream, varying in width from ten to forty yards, and generally deep, is enveloped in almost impenetrable gloom at midday. An occasional chirp of bird, call of water fowl, intonation of frog or cry of squirrel is all the relief one gets in this awful solitude. The darkest night adds no uneasiness to the situation, except the wise remarks of the big owls.

The dwellers along the border of this water-land are a deservedly simple people. They hunt and fish for a living and work for pleasure.

They are hospitable in exchange for the dollar. I abided with them several weeks and mixed freely. There are deer, raccoon, 'possum and

lots of squirrel in the swamp but very difficult to come at, and there are dangers to be met in the pursuit. An involuntary wetting is not altogether pleasant. The cypress knees are promiscuous and hard to get friendly with, and the snakes are ugly, impudent and numerous. Frost had not yet driven them into winter quarters; so that I had little pleasure in hunting. But such fishing! Jack-rocking! I am glad I was taught this fun. I would not be without the experience. I am not sanctified. The people thereabout belong to the Sanctificationists. Three of us went jack-rocking one night. We collected an armful of fat lightwood splinters for torches, a box of matches, a jug of strong water; and groped our way to the landing place of the boats, on the creek or drain. Lashing two boats together, side by side, we took our places, one in the bow, one in the stern and myself amidship. I was torch-bearer. All being ready, I made light and the others paddled, splashed and made as much fuss as possible. Here they came—the jacks—a big one butting, banging against my

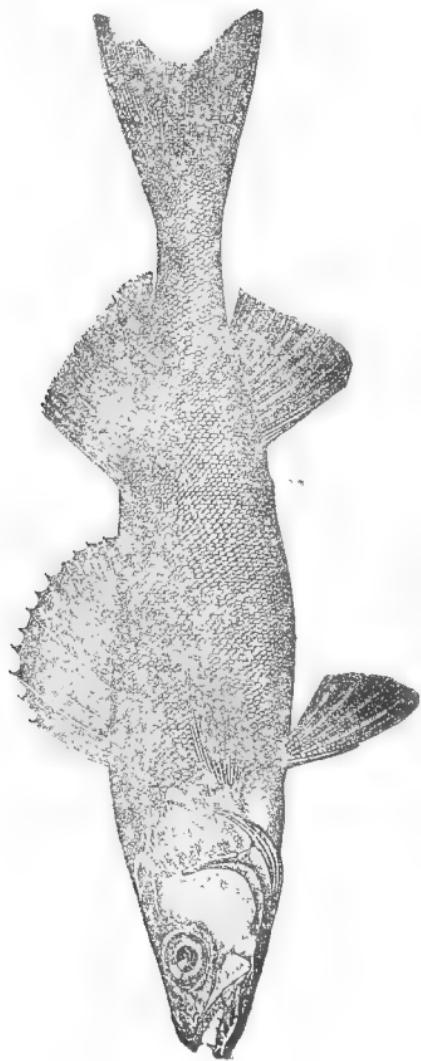
head so hard I thought the man behind had, in his excitement, hit me with his paddle. But as we went up stream the battle increased in ferocity, the bombardment of jack, bass and fliers became fearful. The light I held was the centre of attraction, and my face the target, and the hits were too frequently made. I would forget to hold the torch right and the hot pitch dropping on my hand would hurt. But the excitement smothered the pain. It seemed as if every fish was trying to jump out of the water. They jumped from everywhere towards the light. Some would come out from under the bank to see what was up. All sizes were on the move. The most of them would go clear over the boats; some would come back and over again; many would drop into the boats; and often, no sooner had a big one let go at the right side of my head than another would punch me on the left, as if to put my head back in place. The excitement worried me, and in less than half an hour we had more fish than we cared to "tote" home—several hundred. I soused the light in the water to stop the battle of the "Wilderness," and we

felt our way back to the starting point. I am glad it is over. It was too much fun.

These people told me that they often go to a small lake in the neighborhood, and at night anchor a boat in the middle of it with a light on it, then form a circle about the edge of the lake and jump in with sticks and make a noise, the jacks will all jump for the boat. I believe it, too, because the jack is such an inquisitive fool, and while he is brave he is yet so far human-like that he is liable to run when he gets scared.

Trolling for pike in a row-boat on Lake Coniston, England, I caught my biggest fish, weighing twelve pounds. The lake is five miles long by, probably, a mile wide and several hundred feet deep. I had for a troll an ordinary gold and silver spoon with treble-hook tail, and about 100 yards of line, the most of it in the water, reeled from a two-foot wooden rack.

As soon as the fish hitched on I gave out more line, and he came in several times, keeping me busy taking slack, but soon gave up the rush idea and took to sulking. He would go bottom-

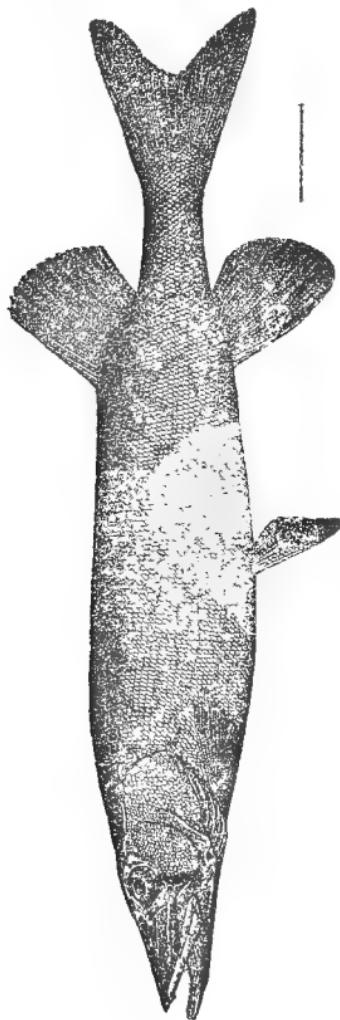


Wall-eyed Pike; Pike Perch.

wards and stand still, seemingly, for minutes. I did not care to aggravate him, yet I wanted him to do his own worrying by getting into action and thereby tire himself. I had learned that it was better to humor a sulker. After a while he got a move on and, taking out my line in different directions, played himself to a stand-still, when I brought him to the boat and my man did the gaff act nicely. He was not very long but not chunky.

On cloudy days, with a light wind, one may have luck and some amusement trolling for jack; but it is nothing like the sport got out of hunting the bass, hitting him and playing him around and about the boat. If he gets away in his fight, all right, I would rather lose him than jerk him over my head as some people do, or take him out before he gets tired and says "enough."

I believe I caught the only wall-eyed pike ever taken in midland North Carolina. I got it in the Neuse, a few miles below Milburnie, and took it to Mr. Brimley at the State Museum to learn what fish it was called in the books.



Other Pike.

Lawson (1709) said:

“The jack, pike or pickerel is exactly the same in Carolina as they are in England. Indeed, I never saw this fish so big and large in America as I have in Europe; these with us being seldom above two foot long, as far as I have yet seen. They are very plentiful with us in Carolina, all our creeks and ponds being full of them. I once took out of a ware above three hundred of these fish at a time.”

CHAPTER X.

OUR PERCHES.

THIS is one of the most difficult subjects to handle, connected with fish life; because everybody knows a perch and has a name for it. The authorities class all these, as well as black bass, under the common denomination.

Sun fishes, which, perhaps, is well enough; but why not Moon fishes?

The wall-eyed pike is also charged up as a pike-perch, which it certainly is not.

Since my boyhood days my idea has been fixed that no long fish can be a perch—not even the raccoon or yellow perch because of its shape. Some other name ought to be found for these fishes.

There are many kinds of perch in our waters, and their names are still more numerous and very confusing. It is better simply to say you caught a perch, if you would avoid an argument without a settlement.

Our perch run small compared with those of

the Old World. Isaac Walton mentions one, caught in England, measuring two feet in length. The longest perch on record measured twenty-nine inches.

In Russia they frequently weigh as much as seven pounds.

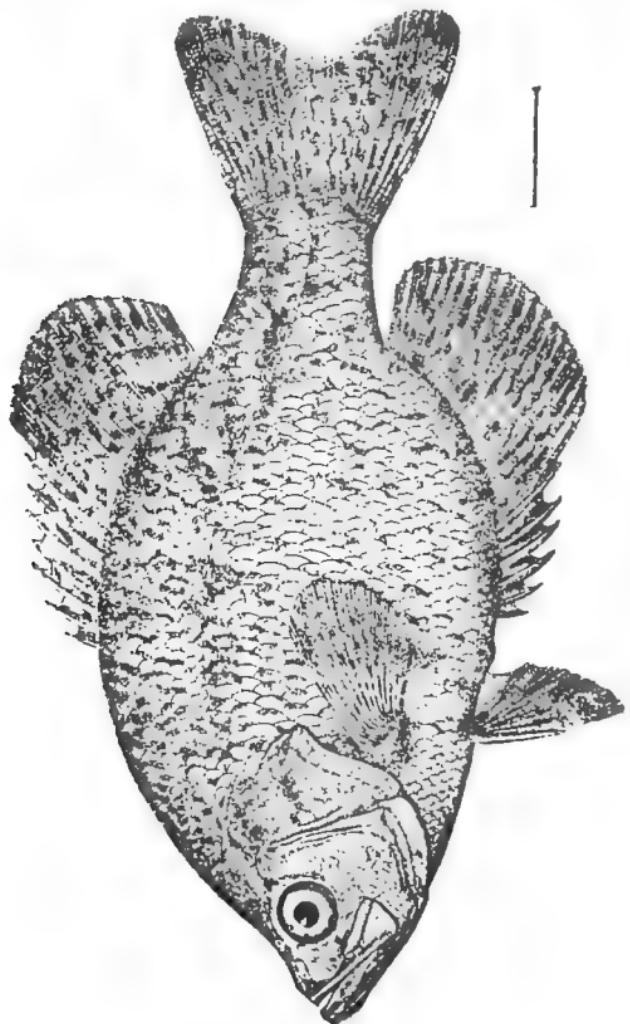
Three pounds is a very big perch with us.

Take the world over the smaller the water the smaller the fish, and the warmer the water the larger the fish.

Perch grow very fast; in the first year an inch perch will become a six-inch one in the third year. A half-pound perch will produce as many as 250,000 eggs in a season.

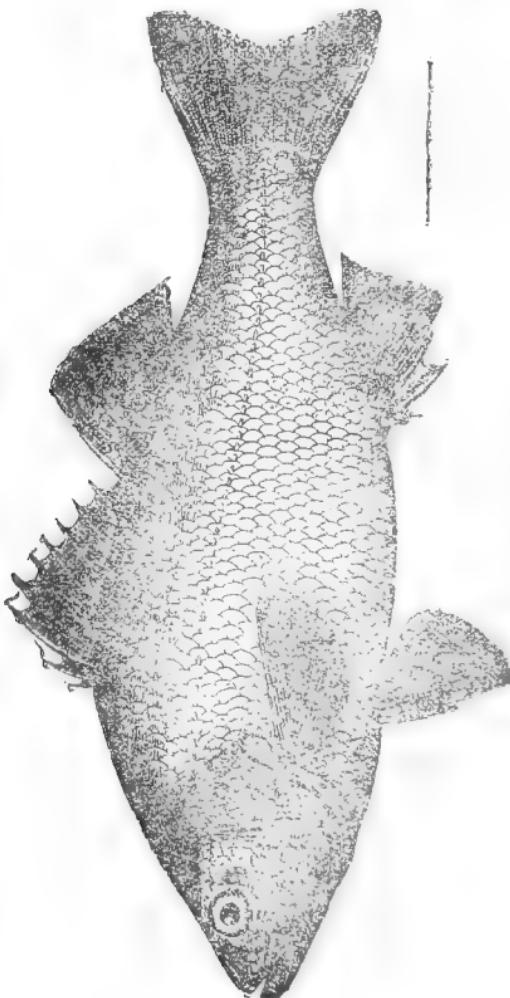
First and foremost in the perch family I must place the "crappy," which is most commonly talked about, yet it is neither common nor so well known as it should be.

It is very generally called "white" perch, but it is not a true white perch. This fish is silver-gray in any other than black water, where its color becomes speckled, black and white, the male being darker on a white ground than the female.



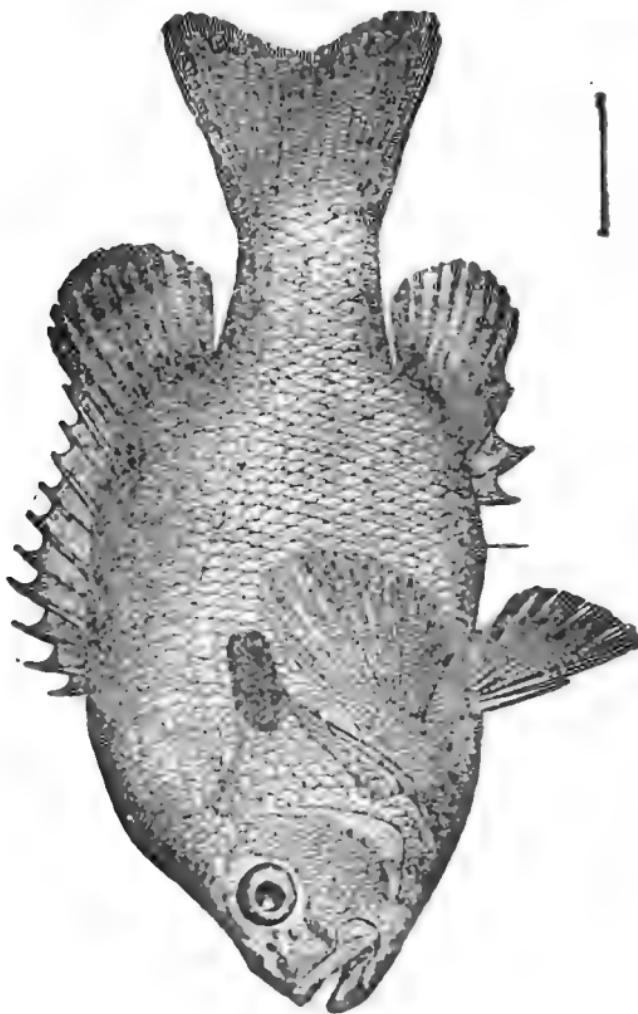
It is plentiful in the Neuse and tributaries, schools and scatters, like bass, and appears to be a sort of chum to bass, frequenting the same waters, and preferring live bait. Specimens have been taken measuring as much as fifteen inches, although they generally run much smaller. This fish will take a small minnow as early as February, in the river; and while the crappy is not such a free biter as some people assert (up country), yet the strike is thrillingly bass-like and the fight pretty, but the mouth is so tender that much play is not permissible, as they will tear loose from the hook. I do not like the name "bass," as applied to it, but prefer "crappy." It is thinner than the bass and yet longer than other perch. The flesh is "good to eat," as indeed all perch are palatable.

It does not nest like other varieties, but it deposits its spawn upon bushes, stumps and rocks.



White Perch.

All fish are liable to partly take on the color of the water they live in; hence, we often hear many distinct varieties called "white perch," which is not true. Again, age makes a difference in coloration. The genuine white perch, although called by other names, according to locality, is plentiful in all our rivers and lakes. It is a free biter, and while preferring small minnows, will readily take cut-fish bait, and give plenty of sport for its size. However, there is a knack in knowing when to strike this particular perch, which I never got "onto."



Long-eared Sun Fish: Red-belly; Robin.

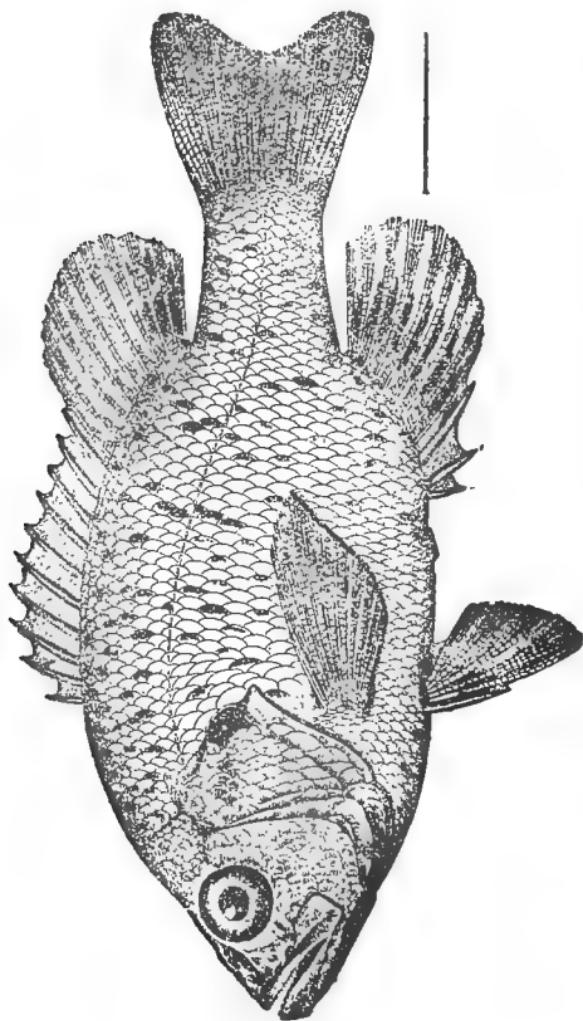
The mouth is rather small, it has two dorsal fins, attains to a weight of three pounds, and goes in large schools.

The long-eared "robin" or red-belly is frequently met with, but it is a worm feeder and slow biter, and, moreover, a lazy, don't-care, swallower of bait.

On the contrary, the "warmouth," known by every other sort of a Christian name attached to the surname "mouth" is everywhere, although not abundant anywhere, will readily take any sort of bait, and take it in such a manner you think you have got a whale until he quickly gives up and comes in without a kick left to flop good-bye with. If your fist is small enough you can jam it in one of these six-inch allmouths.

It is often called "goggle-eye," has ten spines in the dorsal fin, and hardly ever exceeds ten inches in length.

We also have "fliers" in the Neuse River territory, which bite strongly and make a skittish fight; but they are not often caught with hook and line. The "book" says they are night feeders, which probably accounts for so few of them



Warmouth or Goggle-eye.

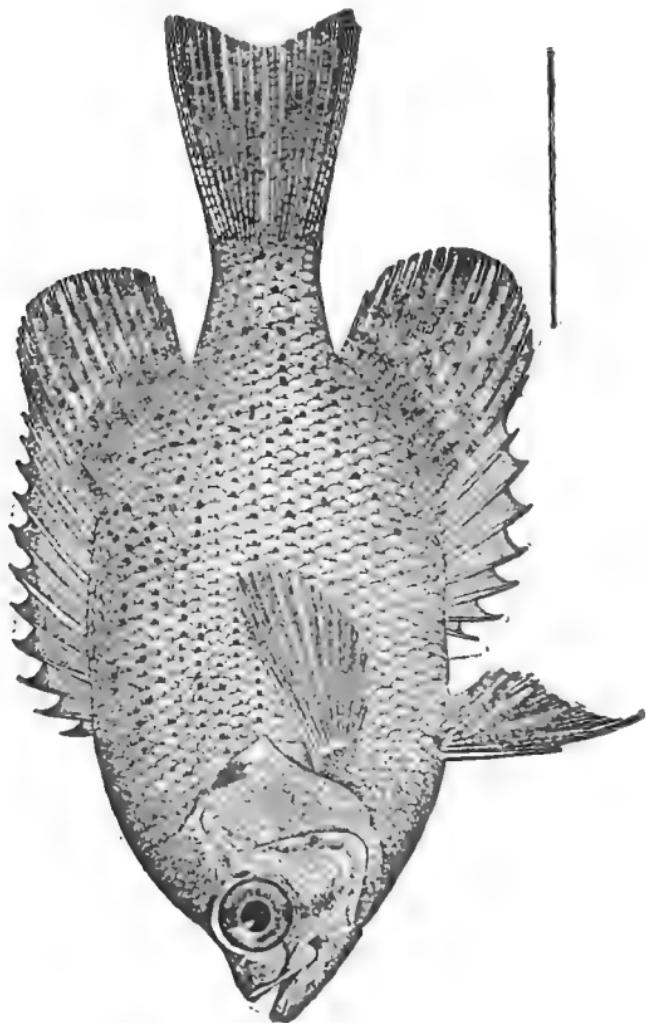
being taken. They are, however, very pretty fish, and the sharp bones in the dorsal fin are very dangerous. W. Z. Blake caught one of these fish in Myatt's pond, which weighed two pounds and four ounces, was eleven and one-quarter inches long and six and a half inches deep.

The "flier" has eleven dangerous dorsal spines and five anal spines.

For its size the "blue bream," with many affectionate aliases, carries much sport. He reaches a pound and a half in weight, is stocky, has little lengthwise shape; in fact, may be compared to a big "sixteen to one" dollar, with a mouth on one edge and a tail on the opposite edge. He bites hard and freely, preferring a big worm bait, and if you come across a school you can take it all in.

His mouth is small, thick and tough, so that it is difficult to lose him, even purposely. He is hard to kill. His flesh is firm, flaky and of nice flavor.

Like the "crappy" he also lives on friendly terms with the bass. The young bream is nearly



white, and I have never been able to negotiate one of them as bait with a bass, while other small perch might quickly find lodging in a bass' stomach.

This is the best fish of the perch family to mix with bass and shad roaches in ponds. The bass will not harm the bream nor the bream harm the roaches, thus making an ideal fish-pond. This bream is very prolific, is a good feeder and is hardy. Although it thrives best in streams it will do well in lakes and ponds. Nearly white when young, it becomes a slaty-blue with age, and is the largest of the true perches. It is sometimes called "blue joe," very pretty, so let us know him as "Joe." It is not a good pan fish. However, writers differ about this matter.

Perch prefer clear water and commonly dwell among plants near the bottom. They grow very slowly, and not migratory.

The small red-belly perch, commonly called "gourd seed" perch, is abundant in all our lakes and ponds. The small boy's delight—it will bite at almost anything it can swallow, and at any time; and withal, it is an excellent pan fish.

The "calico" bass is a perch with which I am but imperfectly acquainted. Although it is said to be a free biter, yet it does not count as a game fish—surrendering too quickly. It is not adapted to pond culture because it is too partial to feeding on young fish.

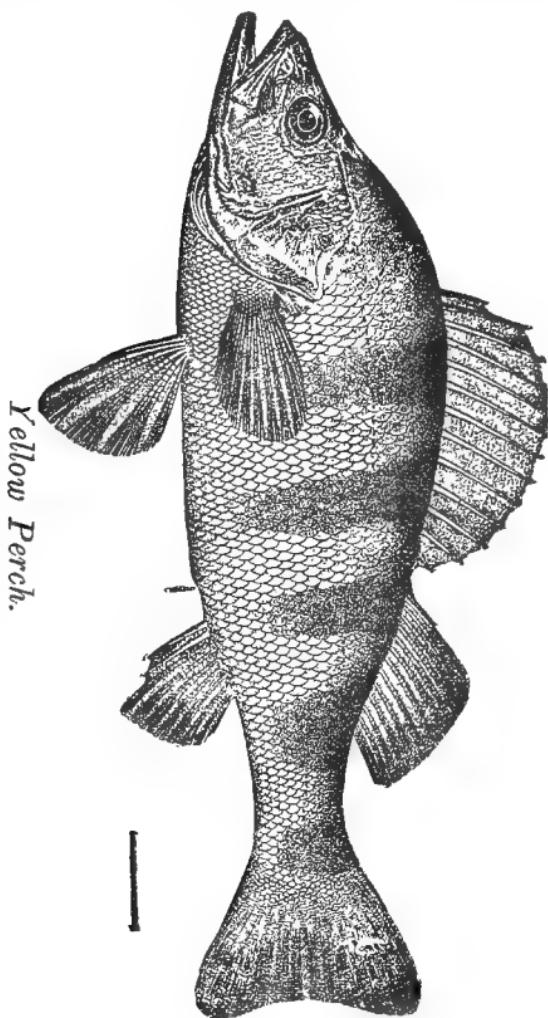
It is known in some localities as silver or speckled perch, and weighs as much as two pounds. And it is also bothered with the additional name, "crappy."

The long yellow "raccoon" perch is very abundant in the Neuse and Tar rivers, but it is an undesirable fish for ponds on account of its destructive habits, and it is not liked as a fish because it is so difficult to clean.

The "mud chub," a big mouth, vigorous biting little fellow is known everywhere, and is said to be a night feeder.

It is quite possible that so many different names for perch may have been caused by mixing the species in land-locked ponds.

We know that the rock and the shad have been hybridized, and there is no reason why hybrids should not result from mixing different species of perch in confined locations.



Large-mouth perch prefer minnow or other live bait; but the young wasp, any fly, grub and angle worms will be readily taken by the small-mouth fish.

To tempt perch to a particular spot, put a few minnows in a large, clear glass bottle, stop it so as to allow fresh water to come in, and sink it at any desirable place; the perch will congregate as if it were a Primitive Baptist annual meeting.

I am sorely aware that all I may say in my fish stories may not agree with the experience of others, but I get some consolation in the knowledge that I get some pleasure myself out of the relation of a fisherman of forty years' standing on two continents—in other words, I get some pleasure, and whenever I lack in practical personal experience I seek the advice of my friend, Bill Blake, the best fresh-water fisherman in North Carolina. Neither he nor I fish to fill our stomachs.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CATFISH AND SUCKERS.

WE North Carolinians have no catfish big and strong enough to pull a Mississippi River stern wheel steamboat off a mud bank, but the familiar old catfish of our boyhood days is abundant in all our waters. Whether, like an eel, he glides over land in the dew of night, when he usually stirs about, from pond to pond, it is not certain; guard against his intrusion as much as we will he gets there all the same—possibly through the assistance of the clouds.

The first fish I ever caught was a catfish, which courteously hitched one side of his mustache to my hook and could not unhitch it by himself. I was a proud boy that day.

The catfish has no scales, but instead, it has a plentiful outfit of horns, or thorns, at odd places. Its head is the largest part, except when the fish is full, and the innocent face reminds one of a full moon with a well-defined mouth running clear across the center of it; yet it never suffers itself to be eclipsed.

The catfish gets much blame that it is not entitled to receive. It does little, if any, harm; it can hardly catch a minnow, even when the latter is on a hook; it can be prohibited from becoming too many; it consumes refuse and mud without pay, which is laudable; it eats grass, which shows that it is like man, an all-round feeder, in taking into consideration both animal and vegetable substances.

The flesh is fine, firm and white; well flavored, and is really as much an epicurean diet as that of lamprey eel. It is excellent, too, when made a "muddle" of in connection with pork, potatoes and red pepper, boiled to a standstill. Likewise, a diet of catfish nicely steamed and served with tobasco sauce is a dish that is unfit for the stomach of a collard and turnip gourmet. Nicely baked cornbread, hoe-cake style, without the addition of Yankee eggs and cotton-seed lard is the best bread to eat with any sort of fish.

Catfish should be skinned when being prepared for the fire, and the best way to do this is to make an erasure with a sharp knife around

the head just back of the eyes, when the skin can be easily pulled off, the same as a rabbit. It can also be removed by scalding, which, however, is a reminder of skinning in the hereafter.

We have several kinds of catfish, but the blue or channel cat runs the largest in streams east of the Blue Ridge, and is the cleanest feeder. I have frequently caught them with hook and line in the Pee Dee River weighing as much as six pounds. In truth, I caught one recently in Myatt's pond, near Raleigh, which weighed four and one-quarter pounds.

Catfish and eels seem to feed and bunk together, for where one is found the other is pretty sure to be handy. By the way, both American and English authorities say that eels go to sea to spawn; while this may be true generally, yet I know that all of them do not take this annual outing unless they have adopted a relay system, because I have frequently taken large eels in summer in streams where the outlet to the sea was unobstructed. The eel is highly esteemed as food in some parts of the country; if it is allowed to get cold, however,

it will have to be cooked again—a peculiarity of eel flesh.

In former years catfish were very plentiful in the Pee Dee River, about the Grassy Islands, where the river is a mile wide. Amongst the hundreds of little grassy islands covered by water in flood, and millions of rocks, in the swifts and eddies, it was great fun to catch them with a 60-yard seine; and often seven or more hundred would be taken in a few hours, brought to bank, cleaned and put into a big old fashioned wash-pot for a well seasoned wet-stew. Served hot, in tin cups, right there on the bank it required no false appetite to be appreciated.

There is no such easy work as making a land haul with the seine amongst these swifts and eddies, in places one minute ankle deep and the next “ker souse” over one’s head.

But the two staffs are quickly brought together, upstream in swift water and the seine is bagged down stream the lead lines being drawn together; then it is strictly hand fished by all except the bow-legged man at the bag end who allows the slack to wash between his legs

forming a cul de sac wherein he traps most of the fish. The expert catfish catcher now gets in his work in fishing the seine, and if there is a big haul he sometimes "comes up" with a catfish on each of his ten fingers which are taken off by another person and handed over to be strung upon a grapevine—then used as a fish stringer.

The catfish is a bottom loving fish, and while angle worms are the best bait, it will take almost anything dead or alive, from a grasshopper to a well-greased small sized tombstone.

The greatest curiosity in the fish family I ever saw, or heard of, is a two-mouth catfish caught by the writer in a pond near Osborn, N. C., some years ago. It is about 6 inches long and has two distinct mouths, a quarter of an inch apart, with a mustache to each mouth. Surely one big mouth ought to be enough for any catfish. Fortunately I sent it to Mr. Brimley at the State Museum, where it is still preserved as a fish freak.

The spotted or albino catfish is positively dangerous; a prick from his defensive appa-

ratus being as hurtful as a snake bite unaccompanied by imagination, and may require an application of the madstone.

In hook and line fishing very little attention is necessary as the fish will catch themselves if they can only find the baited hook. If it does not succeed in hooking the mustache on, and is bothered much in getting the bait off, it will swallow the whole thing and stay on the hook anyhow.

The yellow catfish of the Mississippi basin is said to attain a weight of over one hundred pounds.

Trot lines and set hooks on poles or bushes is the usual method of catching catfish. The trot lines may be as long as one pleases, but the hook and leader should not be permanently fastened to the main line. The hooks, on small two to five foot lines, should be kept on a board so as not to become entangled. After the line is placed, these may be made fast to it at intervals with an ordinary slip-knot. They can be easily removed and put back on the board.

In fall or winter when fishing trot lines for

catfish sink the bait near the bottom in rivers; while in lakes and ponds the bait should be near the surface. Why this is so I do not profess to know.

Authority says: "The spawning occurs in summer, the large eggs being first deposited in a sandy depression, and subsequently taken into the mouth of one of the parents, where they remain until hatching ensues; the young are retained in the parent's mouth for sometime after hatching." This has reference to the sea catfish only, and I cannot believe the story because a catfish is too often occupied with swallowing something; for the safety of those young ones in his mouth.

In our sounds and rivers the catfish spawn in June or July, and appear to protect their eggs and young like the bass.

And eels go to the sea to spawn, and then die before getting back to fresh water; thus reversing the performance of shad. The young eels go to fresh water in their second year, and remain there until mature, where, unfortunately for the angler, is its real home in adult life.

The migration is down stream to sea by night and upstream to fresh water by daylight. They are enormously prolific. According to one authority, a single female, 32 inches long produced over *ten million* eggs! No wonder she died then.

Probably the old idea that the eel was the male catfish, arose from the fact that no eggs have been noticed in fresh water eels.

I have seen a continuous string of eels, miles long, passing a jutting, rocky point, while bass fishing on the Potomac above Washington City.

Eels feed chiefly at night, hiding in holes or mud during daylight. It is then they strip all the bait off trot lines.

Earth worms likewise come to the surface and feed at night. On a frosty day they may be enticed to the surface by pouring a little warm, sweetened mustard and water into their holes in the turf. They have no perceptible sight nor hearing; but are very sensitive to touch or jar; as may be verified by watching how cautiously a thrush will approach a worm-hole during twilight, or by placing a nearly

stiff-cold worm on the chords of a piano and observe it move when the piano is played. It cannot be sight, may not be sense of hearing, but the vibration starts the worm.

Next to the catfish the suckers are the most abundant and widely distributed fishes in North Carolina.

They are found indiscriminately in rivers, ponds and lakes, and are known by many different names. The flesh is usually white, rather soft, somewhat flavorless; and, except the kind known as red-horse, is hung on to so many small bones that a person not fitted with a thresher in his mouth had better not undertake to eat this fish.

Indeed one writer says the "sucker" is composed of "flabby solids filled with treacherous bones."

The redhorse is perhaps the largest of the species, and frequently works its way up to as much as 8 pounds in weight. It also has fewer bones and the flesh is firmer. They will cautiously take a hook baited with angle worm or dough mixed with lint cotton and return a little

fun for being hooked, but it is par excellence the bank fisherman's subject, who uses no float and as soon as his rod trembles (stuck in the ground) with all his might he snatches and throws the fish over his head. Some sucker fishermen use a "grab" or treble hook, which rests upon the bottom, with a small baited hook a few inches up the line; and as the suckers suck the bait head downward and tail balanced straight up the line a quick snatch is apt to grab the fish anywhere between the head and tail. This is not a commendable method.

During the early winter the redhorse is probably the best food fish the streams or ponds afford. It is then usually taken in gill nets.

There are besides the redhorse the white sucker, chub sucker, mullet; but the common name "sucker" is ideal and sufficient because everybody readily understands what is meant by the term. Likewise they have various shapes, and all kinds of bones.

They will not live long out of the water, but are so numerous in all our waters that they con-

Fishing in North Carolina.

stitute a very important food fish where no better can be obtained. The red horse is perhaps the largest of the species, and frequently works his way up to as much as 8 pounds in weight. It also has less bones, and the flesh is firmer.

In the spring of the year vast quantities of suckers are taken in traps on the falls of the Pee Dee, in Richmond County, where during the season all other fish than shad, are known as "round" fish, and sold for little or nothing.

I am satisfied that the sucker is entitled to more weight than the authorities credit him with, because I have netted many five-pounders in ponds where they are not so apt to grow as big as in rivers.

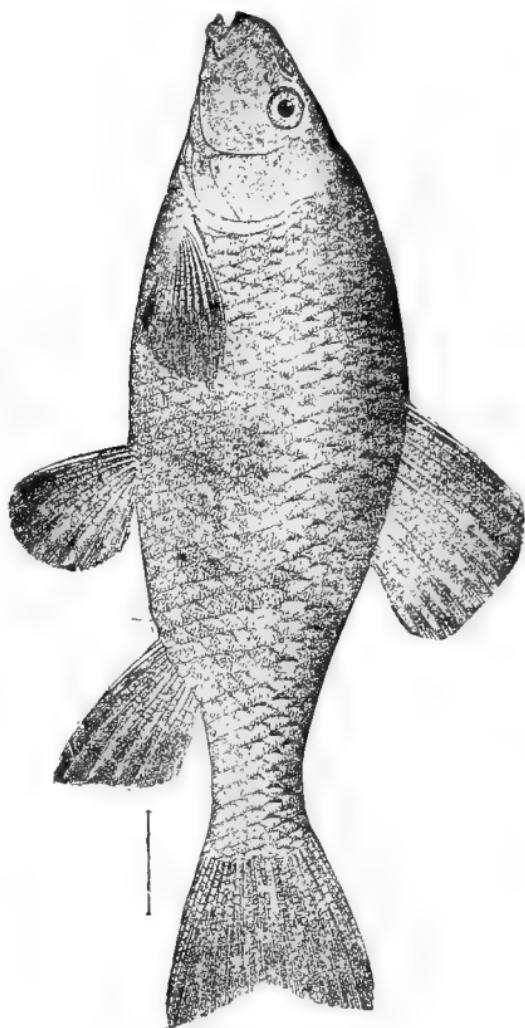
I am impelled to state the fact that fish will spoil quicker when exposed to moonlight, than sunlight. This is curious.

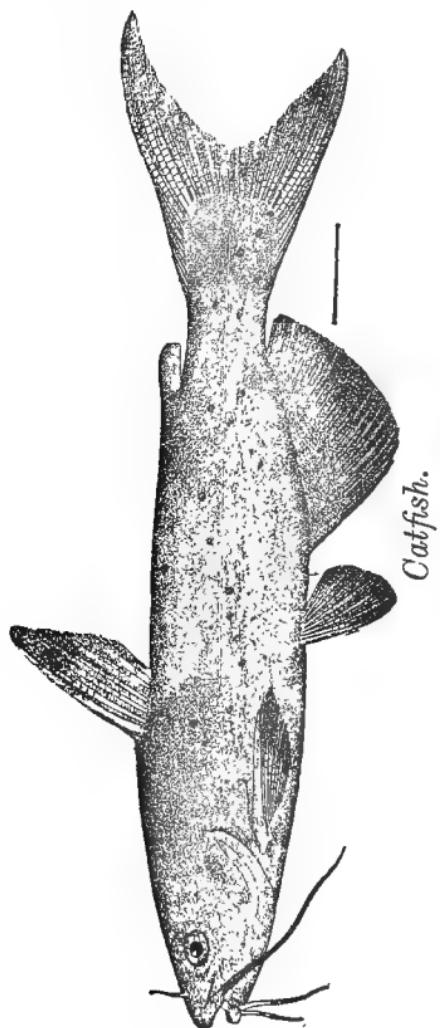
On the contrary meat will spoil quicker exposed to sunlight than moonlight.

In dead things possibly the sun looks after land inhabitants, and the moon is undertaker for the water dwellers; an amicable and a wise arrangement.

It is said that the reason tabasco sauce is so expensive is because the Mexican consumes so much hot condiment during life that his body literally shrivels up when dead, and the necessary extract is therefore very costly. It is very good, however, to eat with fish.

Sucker.





CHAPTER XII.

SEA FISHES.

THE shape of our coast line, and the character and extent of the numerous sounds and bays furnishing outlets for such big rivers as the Roanoke, Tar, Neuse and Cape Fear, make it probably the best State in the Union for fish to feed and frolic in.

Vast schools of all kinds of big fish coming from the South are invited through the various inlets to the sporting grounds supplied by Albemarle, Pamlico and other sounds, and other schools coming from the North, driven by stress of weather, possibly, to take shelter under Hatteras, also find their way into these sounds, and thence make way up the many rivers and creeks to favorite spawning grounds.

In consequence, our coast fishing industry is an exceedingly important one; much capital is invested and thousands of men and women employed in catching and handling the fish, literally millions being caught every year, and often

several hundred thousand at a single haul of the seine. They are shipped and sold, both fresh and salted; fresh in boxes, and salted in barrels.

When I began to write this series of fish stories, I did not intend to have anything to say about the salt-water fishes, because I had so little practical knowledge of the matter. Although I have lived three or four years on the sea coast, I almost invariably went inland to do my fishing.

For what I now say I shall hereby give credit in advance to that admirable work on the Fishes of North Carolina, by Mr. Hugh M. Smith, Deputy U. S. Fish Commissioner; so that all that follows herein is condensed from information contained in the aforesaid book.

The shad is, generally speaking, the most important salt-water fish, because it is not only caught in the sounds but runs far up the rivers to spawn; and is therefore more commonly known and esteemed. While it passes most of the year in the ocean, it seeks fresh water to spawn; and is therefore not strictly or exclusively a salt-water fish.

There is an old saying that the young shad will continue to annually visit the place or river where it was hatched, but this is not absolutely known to be a fact. If it were true they must be given credit for more sense than is possessed by man. It is, however, likely that some of them may return to the same river.

The shad is also the leading fish in North Carolina for market purposes; the annual value of the catch being as large as the two next most important species combined.

The number caught in 1896 at the shad fisheries was approximately twenty-one millions. This does not include those taken while ascending the rivers, of which no record is available.

The average number of eggs is from 25,000 to 30,000, although as many as 100,000 have been taken from a large fish.

The sturgeon was formerly more abundant than at present, and this is somewhat strange when we consider that mature sturgeon may yield from 1,000,000 to 2,500,000 eggs.

Individually considered, it is by far the most valuable fish inhabiting the waters of our State.

A full sized female fish with roe will often bring the fisherman \$80, and it is a matter of record that in 1906 a North Carolina fisherman, who caught 47 large sturgeon in salt water, received for them over \$2,500 after deducting all expenses of shipment. From the roe, caviar is made, which is a great delicacy and very expensive.

The sturgeon is a bottom feeder, and ascends rivers to spawn. It attains a large size, examples having been taken that were 12 feet long and weighed 500 pounds.

The flesh is too oily to be palatable. Indeed, the commercial value consists in the oil and the roe.

The annual migration of alewives (herring) from the sea to the rivers is for the purpose of spawning. The herrings are very prolific; and probably 100,000 eggs to the fish is a fair average.

North Carolina is the leading herring State, and for many years caught more of these fish than any other two States. More than half a million fish have been taken at one haul of the

seine in Albemarle Sound. Many of the fish are sold fresh, but the principal trade is in salt fish, which are put up in various ways in barrels holding 200 pounds.

The menhaden is a very valuable commercial fish, being caught chiefly for conversion into oil and guano. Being very fat it is not much eaten.

The salt water mullet is caught in every county bordering on salt water. This is by far the most abundant and important salt water fish in North Carolina. It is found on ocean beaches, and in the sounds and estuaries during a large part of the year; and is caught in drag nets. The numbers taken are simply enormous, sometimes as many as 500 barrels being secured at a single haul. Two species of this fish range along our coast, and in 1902 nearly seven million pounds were taken.

The Spanish mackerel attains a large size, from 9 to 10 pounds. As a food fish, it is one of the choicest, being hardly surpassed by the pompano.

North Carolina has long been famous for its

blue-fish, which support special market fisheries and also afford excellent sport to many hundreds of persons annually. It sometimes reaches a weight of 30 pounds, and is one of the most highly esteemed and economically important of food fishes, and always fat.

The blue-fish is one of the most ravenous and destructive of fishes, and amongst the strictly salt water fishes of North Carolina it is exceeded in value only by the mullets and sea trout. Yarrow has left the following note on the fish during 1871:

"This species appears in Beaufort Inlet in early spring, but is taken only in nets. In June it commences to take the hook, but the months of August and September are the best for trolling. At this time enormous numbers may be found in schools swimming alongside shoals in tolerably rough water. On the 23d day of September, 1871, four persons, in four hours, took by trolling 660 blue-fish. During the latter part of this month, in the same year, enormous schools were noticed in and near the ship channel, feeding upon the red-billed gar, socalled.

The stomachs of individuals taken were literally crammed with these fishes. The very large specimens of blue-fish occasionally met with in the markets in January never enter Beaufort Inlet; they are taken on the beach from Cape Lookout northward, the run lasting sometimes two months, occasionally only a week or ten days."

Lawson's note on the blue-fish in North Carolina waters in the first decade of the eighteenth century has some historic interest:

"The blue-fish is one of our best fishes and always fat. They are as long as a salmon, and indeed, I think, full as good meat. These fish come (in the fall of the year) generally after there has been one black frost, when there appear great shoals of them. The Hatteras Indians, and others, run into the sands of the sea and strike them, though some of these fish have caused sickness and violent burnings after eating them, which is found to proceed from the gall that is broken in some of them, and is hurtful. Sometimes many cartloads of these are thrown and left dry on the seaside, which

comes by their eager pursuit of the small fish, in which they run themselves ashore, and the tide leaving them, they cannot recover the water again. They are called blue-fish, because they are of that color, and have a forked tail, and are shaped like a dolphin."

Striped bass or rock fish weighing 60 or 75 pounds are not uncommon and occasionally one is taken weighing 100 pounds. The striped bass is one of the best and most valuable of American fishes, the flesh being white, flaky, well-flavored, and remaining firm when shipped to market. As a game fish it is a general favorite in both salt and fresh water, and by many anglers it is more highly esteemed than any other species. A popular method of fishing, practiced mostly in Southern New England is heaving and hauling in the surf with a stout line baited with menhaden or other fish.

In North Carolina the striped bass ranks next in importance to shad and alewives among the anadromous fishes, and the quantity here caught exceeds that in any other State except California.

In 1903 Mr. S. G. Worth, while conducting hatching operations on the Roanoke, stripped from a 20 pound fish a mass of eggs which, after fertilization and immersion in water, measured 60 quarts, equivalent to 1,500,000 eggs.

The pompano ranks as the choicest of our salt water food fishes, and by many as the best. It ranges in size from 2 to 4 pounds, but is not so abundant off our coast as formerly.

The sheepshead is a well-known and valuable food fish, and it reaches a weight of 20 pounds. It occurs in our bays, from spring to fall, but will not take the hook until late in the season. The meat is white, flaky and juicy, and is usually prepared for the table by boiling, or baking. They are not numerous.

The spotted trout or squeteague, is very abundant from February to June. There are several varieties and various names.

Besides the foregoing our coast fisheries supply spots, drum, croakers, pig fish, flounders, butter fish, and many other varieties.

Gordon in "Game and Food Fishes of America," says there are *three billion* herrings

in a single school, if it covers six square miles and that there are some schools much larger than this. That one school would give every human being in the world three herrings.

The shad, the herring, the salmon, and the sturgeon are the principal salt water fishes that go to fresh water to spawn.

CHAPTER XIII.

FISH PONDS.

IT is such an easy, inexpensive, matter for everyone who owns land to possess a fish pond that really it is a wonder there are so few of them throughout the country. And aside from the sport afforded, one can quickly catch a breakfast of the nicest and most nourishing food, at a moment's notice, in all weathers from a well-stocked pond.

The first thing to be reckoned with is that there shall be a never-failing supply of running water, however small it may be; and the next thing, although not absolutely necessary, is that the pond be surrounded by woodland. When it is situated in the midst of cultivated fields the water gets muddy every time the land is plowed, and the young fry are destroyed in the breeding season by the washing rains. The pond should have both deeps and shallows, shade and sunshine. Trees, undergrowth, logs and stumps should be left in for the use of the fish.

The water will in due course kill the trees and undergrowth, and the insects in the rotting wood will furnish fish food. Never plant water lilies (flag) in a fish pond, they furnish nice protection for small fish and are pretty, but will soon take possession of the pond.

The location having been determined, the dam will next command attention. It should be constructed with ample wasteway, so that the uncertain flood gates need not be depended upon for protection against accident; and above everything else the dam should surely be made tight enough at the start, then, in the spawning season it will keep the water at an average level; otherwise the breeding of fish will be very unsatisfactory.

The best dam, for such ponds, may be built of large, green, pine logs, put up alike and in the shape of the gable end of a log cabin; and closely sheeted both up and down stream. Of course it should be well spiled. The force of the water up stream towards the apex will hold the dam down and the lower tier of logs will serve as an impregnable barrier against that

upper pushing force, thereby holding the dam in place; while the water gliding over in level sheets will preserve the lower tier of logs from rotting, and, what is equally important, will prevent the formation of the deep, undermining hole so common under tumbling dams. This is cheaper and stronger than an ordinary rock dam, and will last as long as the water does; nor will it waste like rock, through the erosive action of water. The dirt part of the dam should be substantially built, and immediately planted with trees having many roots. The idea of the strength of this dam dates back to Cæsar's bridge across the Rhine, perhaps. It has long been known and utilized in the Black River country.

Having got your pond filled with water, you are then to decide upon the kind of fish you wish to introduce into it.

I recommend only two species, as both game and food fish; they are bass and perch, with shad roaches as food for the bass. The large

mouth bass is preferable for ponds, and no kind of perch is objectionable, except the yellow or raccoon perch, which is hard to clean, dry to eat, and destructive to young fry of other fishes.

The blue bream is more at home in streams, and is wandering in its habits, but I must stand by it as the "touch down" of the perch family, even for ponds. I have caught hundreds of them in the head waters of Black River in June and July when they come up in schools to spawn. They put up a strong, nasty, little fight, but are difficult to lose.

If the pond is intended only to furnish food fish, no better can be introduced than the ordinary mullet or sucker which is a ravenous feeder, quick grower and very prolific, besides requiring no attention at all and is easily netted. Do not allow a carp in the pond.

The United States Fish Commission at Washington, D. C., will give a reasonable supply of any fish desired to stock ponds where it is not the purpose to raise fish for sale. All that is necessary to get these fish, is to write to the Congressman, stating the size, condition and

location of the pond; and the kind wanted. In due time the fish will be sent free of any cost whatever to the nearest station.

The most natural food for fish is insects and worms, but they greedily seek and devour fish eggs and small fish. It is but a repetition of the eternal round of matter; one goes out of existence and still more (except in France) come into existence. "The Book," says "man may come and man may go, but I go on forever." Man keeps apace; he increases in number; I do not think water increases in volume except in its roll to the sea.

Nearly all fish are carnivorous, and while they have a preference for certain kinds of diet, they will take almost any living object that is not too large. They really seem to live to eat, and they grow accordingly as food is abundant. Bull frogs will come to the pond, and toad frogs will go on it and produce an abundance of fish food in the shape of the venerable fat-bellied tadpole and young frogs. All kinds of insects will likewise come or happen on the water to supply dessert for the fish; and, unless the pond

is overstocked, the fish will forage for their own food and thrive.

Buckland, the great naturalist, speaking of pike, says at one year old the fish will weigh half a pound, at two years, two pounds, and will attain as much as six pounds in his third year; after which his growth slackens like the hen in demonstrating her egg plant. There are exceptions, however. The largest pike which ever came under his personal observation measured 46 inches in length, weighed 35 pounds, and was 15 years old. He also refers to the habit of pike when their stomach is full, of basking in the sunlight at the top of the water; and states that in this condition they are frequently attacked by kingfishers and eagles, when a big pike will put up a nasty fight.

The eagle is sometimes the loser, his talons becoming embedded in the back of the fish and being unable to let go and unaccustomed to diving he is taken under and drowned.

The wound on the fish rapidly heals and fishermen always get scared when they hitch on to such a pike with the skeleton of the eagle on

his back—they scuttle either line or boat and go home to tell about the matter.

A friend of mine says that while fishing below the dam at Lake View Pond, a pike took his minnow and darted off quickly, became "hung up," and he was at a loss what to do. Upon examination he found the pike stuck in an augur hole that had been bored through the plank dam to let the water off. Pike are notoriously strong swimmers.

This pond, by the by, situated on the S. A. L. about 60 miles from Raleigh has been well stocked with bass and other fishes, is a beautiful sheet of water, with nice boats and boat houses; and is really a part of the modern and thriving winter resort, Lake View.

Pike are sometimes taken with eels in an eel pot. A serviceable and cheap eel pot is made of an ordinary barrel, both ends in, with several large augur holes through which stockings are pushed, open at both ends, and tacked around the holes. The stocking hangs inside and the fish going through the hole and stocking after the bait will never find its way out.

Pike will not only take young ducks, bull

frogs and water rats, but will devour each other. The "book" relates an incident where a ten pound pike was caught with the head of a nine pounder stuck in his mouth. The lad who caught it wondered to see a "muckle fish wi' twa tails."

Buckland, however, remarks that more lies have been told about the pike than about any other fish. I suspect that is true.

Back to my story: Fortunately the rivers and rivulets of North Carolina abound in all sorts of minnows (small fishes) and insect life, many of them literally teeming with a species called shad roach, in some localities shiners; that afford abundant food for big fish. These little fish hunt their own food, consisting of eggs of other fish, worms and bugs, working their way around the ponds in vast schools; accompanied by game fish which hover on the outskirts of the school, and when the appetite prompts, they dart into the school. There is a rush to get out of the way, a ripple on the water is noticeable; and then all is calm again—one fish having gone inside another and no hole is made in the water.

A bass or jack or perch has punctuated a period in a minnow; that is all, a minnow has filled a void and no outside space is vacant.

Since writing the above a friend of mine who I never suspected of knowing anything about fish culture has kindly "put me wise" on a vital point of interest regarding the value of fish ponds, thus proving again the adage that there is always something left to learn.

He advises that every man who owns a farm with a suitable stream of water on it should first paint his house white and the blinds green; secondly, plant a variety of fruit trees, those most suited to climatic conditions; and lastly, make a nice fish pond and stock it well. He says this is the surest method of attracting a purchaser. If the farmer should ever desire to sell his property, he will need no other advertisement; if he should not care to sell, the trees and the pond will provide both pleasure and income.

The trees will be bearing and the fish will be ready for taking in the third year. The fish may be fed upon finely chopped fresh meat,

such as liver, or meal dough, and although I think their sense of hearing is deficient they can be taught to come to the "bell" at a certain hour everyday. For hundreds of years the carp in the pond at Charlottenburg, near Berlin, Germany, have thus been fed.

The ten acres, more or less, devoted to the fish pond, after the second year will annually return more dollars worth of food, saying nothing of the sport, than the original value of the acres plus the two hundred dollars cost of the dam, and the value of the farm will thereby be enhanced.

Any kind of dam besides the one recommended will answer, the great desideratum being strong and tight, such as log or rock, which muskrats cannot interfere with. A dirt dam can only be protected against the rat by using cement or wire, until the roots of trees have webbed it firmly together.

In the open land, the pond should be well ditched so as to prevent surface water from entering it except through the natural channel; in the woods, this does not matter so much.

Two many roaches in a pond will play havoc with the spawn of other fish unless those other fish do their duty by decimating the roaches; but the bass will not fail in this line of profit, pleasure and duty.

An overstocked pond is almost as bad as no pond at all, unless the fish are fed from the outside; that is by the owner, and even then they will become stunted, and will not breed well.

Thirty years ago there were twenty times as many private fish ponds in North Carolina as there are today, and the cause of the decline was chiefly through the introduction, unwittingly, by the government of the detestable German carp. This is the hog of the fish family, muddy in taste and soft, destructive of spawn and eats out a mud dam more energetically than a muskrat.

If all the fish eggs spawned were hatched and came to maturity the waters of the earth would overflow the land. A salmon weighing 50 pounds is said to spawn two million eggs.

It is a mistaken idea that very old ponds

have the most fish in them; on the contrary they have the fewest, although the fish are larger. And fish breed faster in ponds with plenty of shallow water and sunshine than in deep water shadowed by trees.

Mr. A. S. Rascoe, owner of an old mill pond in Bertie County that is two miles long, which afforded excellent sport with both bass and a large variety of speckled perch until a few years ago, noticed that the perch were becoming very scarce and also that the bass would not take any sort of bait. He let the water run out and found very few perch but a great many big bass, weighing 5 or 6 pounds, and millions of shad roaches. His theory, probably correct, is that the bass being unable to get at the roaches in the shallow water and amongst the thick under-growth turned upon and destroyed the perches; so that the roaches being, practically immune from attack, fed upon the spawn of both bass and perch while their own spawn was, like themselves, comparatively exempt from the depredation of other fishes.

Mr. Rascoe is now at a loss to know how to

get rid of the roaches. They cannot be seined out because of logs and other obstructions. They may be killed by drawing off the water and putting quicklime in the run-way at the head of the pond; but this method is rather barbarous because it would destroy all other small fish.

Ponds should be drawn off every seven years in order to get rid of the big fish. The smaller fish should be allowed to remain, and as they grow very fast the pond will be ready for fishing again at the end of two years.

It is well to remember that in the early stage of drawing off a pond most fish run upstream, whereas later they go downstream by force of circumstances. I fix upon the seven year term because that, or a multiple thereof, seems to be the usual cycle for the happening of everything else.

A sturgeon is on record as having been caught which measured 12 feet in length, and weighed over 500 pounds. Twenty-five per cent of the roe-sturgeon (in weight) consists in eggs. It is estimated that one sturgeon produces as many

as two and a half million eggs. Multiply that sum by either 12 feet or five hundred pounds, and take all the coming winter to figure out, if all the eggs of all the sturgeons came to this size, how long would it take to spill the ocean out of its socket? Spiel.

This is the best of my fishtruths.

CHAPTER XIV.

FISHING TACKLE—SOMETHING ELSE.

MUTUAL helpfulness between fishermen, of the genuine sort, will enable them to gain and to give the fruits of actual land and water experiences; and while many of the stories told about the habits and freaks of nature's cold blooded inhabitants may appear to the outsider and to the careless observer to be untruthful, yet there is generally firm fact for the basis.

Do we not possess a great many well-defined deformities and idiosyncracies in the human race? We know that the Spartans had a drastic legal remedy for the future beautification of mankind.

Our knowledge of fish, bug and animal life is, as yet, in its infantile stage. The chief pursuit of these creatures has until now been confined to the one purpose of profit; with fish for food and oil, bugs for ornament, dyes and ointment, beast and feather life for a variety of purposes but all for man's material physical purposes.

True nature students as well as genuine sportsmen, follow the pursuit of the denizens of the water more for the sake of head and heart, than to morbidly gratify the stomach; hoping to get before the general public a proper understanding of the relationship between man and the lower order of created things; and while progressing towards this end, if the searchers get delight as well as enlightenment for themselves, it is nevertheless a distinct gain for mankind. What better recompense for that soul than to feel that it possesses a fairly correct knowledge of the habits and purposes, on land and in water, of other creatures than man; that not only fish, and birds, and beasts, and bugs, had a motive in the Creation; but even the despised earth worm does man more practical service than all the geese in Christendom, notwithstanding the fact that their cackling alarm has no superior in the many mechanical devices of man, nor amongst women.

There can be no manner of doubt that the best fishing tackle is preferable, and that while common tackle may occasionally catch more

fish; still a broken rod, a rotten line, or a faulty hook, can make no amends for the loss of a fine fish and a mellifluent temper. The best is none too good when one considers that in the delights of the peaceful avocation, quality may be of vital importance, for surely peace reigns where one can forget enemies as well as friends.

It is not necessary to obtain the prettiest nor the costliest tackle; but I lay great stress on the word *best* which can only be had at a greater cost than inferior goods, and only from dealers of repute.

I am not much on canoes, but I am some on boats. I was born in the canoe age, in a dug-out county, have dug the canoe out of a log myself; and floated and fished with them, too, neither myself nor the canoe sank whatever the risk run, both rotten perhaps, yet alive in heart.

The era of the old style canoe (dug-out) however, is past, and the era of a perfect wooden boat for fishing purposes has never begun.

Some months ago I described in the *News and Observer*, what I thought to be the best

wooden boat for bass fishing. To be brief, it is a light running boat 12 feet long, and 3 feet wide from stem to stern unless you want it coffin-shaped and pretty so that it will get jammed between stumps or trees just when you least want to make any noise, or jar the water. This is the best boat, yet unbuilt, except by myself; cheap, easy running, and safe enough to stay on top of the water as long as man and boat care to keep company.

But there are steel boats, compartment and non-compartment built, light, easy running, unsinkable and nearly imperishable; the pioneer and the best is the Mullins boat, which is good for the rich sportsman and cheap enough for any man who fishes.

Next we come to the rod, and whether it be a split bamboo Touradif, a Bristol steel rod, a greenheart, or a common cane, all are entitled to the respect of the handler. Rod, line and hook combined can catch but little game, if the master spirit is a whole or half-witted bigot.

It is an invidious task to prescribe for any-

body what rod, line and hook should be used, but there is a little glory in the cussing.

For use in bass fishing, in midland North Carolina, I advise the purchase of one light split bamboo rod, 10 feet long, and costing anywhere from 10 to 30 dollars which is used for fly or bait; then a Bristol steel rod, say 8 feet long for similar use. If time is no object and opportunity is handy, also have one old style 15 foot home-grown cane to jerk the fish over your head with.

Reels are useless in uneducated rivers, lakes and ponds, even if not handled by a person who ought to be on the other end of the fishing machinery.

The line, well, that is more a matter of feel than taste—the man will have the taste but the fish will do the feeling. The fish will make use of all the line senses while the man can scarcely concentrate his wit upon any one sense, during the battle. The best line is the best. Some other truths are equally queer. With a reel slick, smooth and strong and without a reel, strong, smooth and slick, is the best line; and

it can be secured by paying a big price for it. Select your bass lines without consulting your pocket, do the same with your perch lines; but if you are a bank fisherman after eels, catfish and other scavengers, select Cuttyhunk lines which are the best all round cheap lines made.

As to corks or floats everybody owns his choice; some preferring barrel-shaped, others liking the hen-egg shape, others the rooster-egg shape, and still others a cork pointed at both ends; but I prefer a sound 3 1-2 inch cylinder-shaped cork so that if I am momentarily occupied with thoughts about other people's business and the bass socks that cork under, I can hear it make a noise like a Keeleyite taking a drink.

Then let us come down the line to the hook and this should be medium-sized, sharp, and springy, with a long and perfect barb. It does not matter whether it have eye, or the line is to be knitted on; most fishermen, however, prefer the latter, claiming greater strength for it, and I like it.

The present generation has grown to favor smaller hooks for all sorts of fish; and if we

consider the size of a 7-lb chub's mouth it would take a small anchor to fit it and hold the fish.

I prefer the eyeless Limerick hook with a slight turn. The barb of the Cincinnati bass hook is too small for safety.

As regards leads everything will depend on the water to be fished, whether still or swift, the bait used, the fish to be caught and the angler himself.

For carrying fish there is no contrivance that compares with the French Willow Basket, No. 2, capacity 12 pounds; fitted with a leather or cloth shoulder strap, the total cost being one dollar and fifty cents.

A very serviceable minnow seine made of strongly woven netting 1-3 inch mesh, 8 feet long, and rigged with floats and sinkers ready for use will cost another dollar and a half.

An ordinary, strong piece of cord, a yard or so long, with a small stick tied to one end is very useful to string fish upon as soon as caught in order to tie them out and keep them alive.

The writer has had no great experience with net fishing because he has rather "looked down"

upon it as an ignominious way of taking fish. It comes in mighty handy, however, on an extended outing alongside fishy waters. Often when fish will not take bait, and food becomes scarce the larder may be replenished by one night's judicious netting.

The ordinary gill net is most commonly used in ponds. It should be of fine flax thread, the mesh from 1 1-2 to 2 inches square, which will gill almost any five pound fish, and the nets should be from 15 to 30 feet long, 4 to 6 feet deep, without floats or sinkers, and stretched taut between two stakes firmly driven into the ground.

Winter is the best season to use the gill net because fish do not spawn then and terrapins have gone to sleep. The nets should be fished two or three times each night and taken out stretched and dried every two days.

For small streams the double funnel fyke net is a very greedy catch in spring time when fish run up stream hunting spawning grounds. With wings like those on a partridge net, extending to either bank, it will take every living

thing going upstream, either within its big or little funnel and hold the catch.

In such a net I caught one night a promiscuous lot, consisting of suckers, perch catfish, bass, a muskrat, bull-frog and a turtle. The rat and turtle were dead, and this is how I found that a turtle would drown. It and the rat had evidently gone into the net after a bait of fish, and overstaying their time could not get to air quick enough.

The H. H. Keffe Co., 523 Broadway, New York, is an old and a thoroughly reliable firm who deal in all kinds of fishing tackle.

A good, strong, strictly first rate and yet inexpensive knife is a necessity on a fishing trip. I know of none better than those made by the Maher & Grosch Co., of Toledo, Ohio. I have used these knives for years.

CHAPTER XV.

NORTH CAROLINA TURTLES.

I WAS down at Pather Branch, fishing in the club pond, several days last week and caught four turtles. Some of my friends down that way asked me to write a turtle story; therefore I will make that subject my cry this beautiful Sunday morning. Turtle is as much fish as flesh and fowl, anyhow.

I caught three of these turtles, and a large water moccasin on hooks set in the manner hereinafter explained, and baited with cut fish. I left the snake on the hook.

The biggest turtle I caught while fishing for perch, near the bottom in 10 feet of water, with a piece of worm on a small, long shank, roach hook. He came easily to the top and to the boat, when I took him in by the tail. He then used his forepaw and extracted the little hook. They are very strong and difficult to control out of the water, but a grain sack makes a satisfactory prison for him.

The mud or snapping (they all snap) turtle is plentiful in all the rivers, creeks, mill ponds, and mud puddles in this State. His head is large and his body seems unable to grow to fit it.

Before the resurrection of education, rennaissance in turtle thought, this object was commonly called "turkle," and to this day it is so-called in some parts of Johnston County.

In midland country it grows to be as big as 30 pounds weight of the same sort of stuff, and is often caught to weigh as much as 15 pounds; but as he approaches the mountains where winters are longer and no extra fine is attached, he is smaller.

In May he explores the land in search of a soft place to lay eggs; the big she one does this and she also lays the eggs; and they usually frequent regular routes from water to nest. A likely spot having been located Mrs. Turtle will place her right paw firmly on it and with left fore paw and tail, Archimedes around, occasionally stopping long enough to throw out a spadeful of earth. After many girations the neck of the hole is completed and the paw be-

gins to scoop out a bigger opening below for the nest proper; and the dirt is thrown out, ditch-digger like, until a chamber has been arranged big enough and according to specifications, to accommodate the prospective turtle family. The interior arrangement somewhat resembles a government blockade whiskey still of copper. The aperture resembles a well-made crawfish hole in bad lands.

The foremost part of the work being completed, she backs up and deposits an unbreakable egg, which goes through the shute to the bottom, and then cutely covering the hole with sticks, leaves or other stuff she wends her way, turkey hen like, to meet her husband at the watering place where they bathe, frolic and feed.

They start out with a real politician's estimate of how many eggs it will take to fill that hole in the ground, and they keep up the game until it is chock-a-block, when they heap on earth, pound it down hard, and leave the matter to the grannyism of the sun.

As adults they only make use of the oppor-

tunities afforded by the moon, and they therefore think that the sun should bear some part of the burden of caring for the family.

Thirty or forty eggs is a very fair turtle output in any one year. These eggs are elliptical in shape and thick-skinned; if dented the form will never be resumed. The still, or Dutch oven, having baked the eggs until the young turtles conclude to come to life, it only serves a few days as a sort of jail wherein the prisoners, which then resemble pumpkin bugs, are protected from snakes and other enemies. Their shells soon harden, they scratch out of prison and are ready for the fray of life. They must look out for number one from the start. Their own mother does not begin to know them, and the only protection the daddy would give them would be in his stomach; in fact, they must be wary of any living thing whose mouth is bigger than their own or who has any grudge to gratify.

The buck turtle has no parental cares to hold him down, he does not even assist in building the nursery for the young; in fact, he is as

much an independent thing as the man who has 15 or 20 children working in a cotton factory to gratify his lust for politics, whiskey and tobacco.

The terrapin will tumble off a log or rock into the water the instant a drop of rain touches him, but a turtle, which is never seen sunning himself on logs, will bob his head out of the water in a summer shower, looking as happy as if he enjoyed the fresh wetting.

He is most readily caught alongside ponds soon after he has awakened from the winter sleep, when lean and hungry from having practically exhausted the supply of surplus fat taken on the previous fall for winter consumption. But as the weather gets warm toad frogs go on the pond, turtle bait becomes plentiful and easily appropriated. He fattens and gets frolicsome and quarrelsome. These quarrels originate during pairing season, and the selection of a homestead. Both bucks lose their common sense, forget the world, flesh and devil and go in for gore. The combat is a terribly earnest affair. They do not regard the presence of man

or other beast, but will rush, snap and lock. Little harm is done, however, except when one gets leg-hold, when it is a case of thunder for umpire.

The turtle is in prime condition in autumn, and the first night after a shower is the best time to catch him. Night is his chosen providing time, and after a rain he will patrol the banks in search of food.

He is too matter of fact to take any artificial bait, but is easily snared by scenting or sighting coveted bait. I prefer a live toad frog, hooked through the skin at the back and suspended from the tip of a pole or tree limb, so that the frog may remain on the water, rest or swim, and live for many hours.

When the turtle is hooked he will have to swim, rest or drown; and he cannot get loose, unless he gets hold of a stump, tree or ground; wherefrom he can use his forepaws to advantage.

An ordinary fish pole stuck into the bank is a good enough contrivance. Some people kill the frog and sink the baited hook in the water, trusting to scent only; but I want a live bait

that will call attention to its locality by a more agreeable method—sight. Turtle will take any sort of fish, flesh, fowl, rodent or reptile, alive or dead; and he is particularly fond of chicken offal and can scent it upstream hundreds of yards.

No special size of hooks nor quality of line is necessary, because a turtle will hardly ever cut the line, and quickly learns that the hook is unmanageable.

If one is going to use dead bait I recommend a treble hook, concealing all the points in the bait, as a sure catch.

Various kinds of traps are employed for catching turtles. Boxes and barrels arranged with trap-doors or sides and baited will do the work well. Turtle will often enter common fish traps in pursuit of fish. Another trap is made of a piece of board a foot or more long by eight inches wide, with a No. 1 tooth-jawed steel trap fixed on the underside. The trap is baited, a string is attached and it is anchored wherever desired.

The turtle is not amusing nor interesting like

the terrapin, which falls off a log through aversion to rain, and also to amuse man. Nor does a turtle make a mark of himself on logs, and if he is seen, it is not his fault. He may take a nap or may go wrong and astray, but he retains his commonsense, except in the breeding season or unforeseen adversity. Cunning and temptation may overcome him, but he cannot be bulldozed.

Turtles are too plentiful in our waters and they ought to be got rid of, because so destructive to big fish.

In 1892, while seining Neuse River, near Raleigh, I caught a curiosity in the guise of a soft-shell turtle about five inches across, and brought it home. Speaking to my friend Col. Fountleroy Taylor, a great relator, about the find, he claimed to have discovered this kind of turtle soon after the Civil War, near Savannah, Ga., where it was known afterwards as the leather-back turtle, and became highly esteemed as a table delicacy. He further said that he brought three or four of these turtles home, turned them into Moore's pond, which broke

afterwards, and that there was no doubt this was one of his turtles on his way back to Georgia by the water route. On this relation I would have surrendered my find but for the verified statement of a common friend, who assured us that it was a great mistake to suppose that this turtle was rare in North Carolina. He asserted the fact, without fear of contradiction, that the leather-back turtle was so numerous in the Catawba, above where the *Charlotte Observer* is published, that there was a big industry during the Civil War catching them and shipping the shells to Richmond, Va., to be used in half-soling Lee's army. He said horse leather was scarce then.

Our terrapin are numerous and large, but they have no diamonds on their backs and no meat in their shells; the only flesh that can be got is from the legs—the interior of the hull being as void as a brickyard without clay.

CHAPTER XVI.

BULL FROGS AND TOAD FROGS.

TEN years or so ago, when the water-works pond, near Raleigh, was drawn off for the supposed purpose of abolishing malaria in its neighborhood, I took some friends there to seine for fish.

Dragging the seine in the mud, we scooped up a large bull-frog, the body being six or eight inches long, which had evidently gone into winter quarters deep in the mud. I knew that turtle and terrapin will winter in mud at the bottom of ponds and creeks, but I supposed that frogs, like snakes, wintered in the earth; taking care to get below the frost line. I also know that turtle will drown if netted and kept under water. But how turtle and bull-frogs can pass a whole winter in the wet mud beneath water, without drowning, is yet a matter about which I am in doubt. They must time themselves pretty accurately when preparing for the long sleep, to know just how soon to sink into the

mud, and when to become torpid. A change of weather might fool them, or, perhaps, they are more weatherwise than man. Of course, they cannot drown while in the torpid state, but when warm weather wakes them up they must do some awfully earnest scratching to get up to air quickly; or did they retain a small supply of wind after going to sleep? This is a matter I cannot fathom—posterity may do so—our forefathers, or heretofores, have not enlightened us.

The frog referred to above was to all intents and purposes a dead frog; he was not stiff, to be sure, but cold and motionless, having even taken the trouble to close his eyes, which is almost a painful job for a frog to do. Out of mere curiosity, a thing that pursues me, I resolved to keep him for observation; therefore, I washed the mud off and gently placed him in my outside coat pocket.

I had forgotten all about my frog until when, about a mile from home, I was startled at hearing a loud noise down in my pocket. The other occupants of the carriage being in ignorance of

the whereabouts of the frog were awfully amused. It was a genuine *bloody-now*. The heat from my body had warmed Bull—I forthwith named the frog—into life; and Bull lost no time in announcing his reappearance in the same business, if not at the same old stand.

I thought I had found a loud gold mine and was delighted at the renaissance of Bull. I took him to my room, kept him warm, petted him, and proceeded to educate him in graded school style—gymnastics first and mathematics afterwards. He was not long in getting over his stiffness and could jump all right; his eyes were open big enough, but he seemed unable to comprehend distance and direction; which, probably, fitted him for a night watchman's job.

Bull was a very clean and otherwise decent frog, but I would not let him sleep in my bed, which he seemed very much inclined to do; yet he had free range of the room.

I could not persuade him to eat worms, and it being winter time there were no flies; but I gave myself little worry over his not feeding, since if he could go a whole winter without grub—he

ought easily fast a month or so in this enforced summer—this extra life.

I went ahead with his mental education without any great concern about developing or directing his physical powers; and I had the satisfaction in a short while of believing that he understood a thing or two—something, at least, about sign language, volupuk, or Carnegie, perhaps. Bull was a very apt pupil and learned without coercion or reward.

Quite accidentally, I struck upon a method of teaching him how to count, and I will tell about that in the next chapter.

But truly, I soon taught him to count up to twenty, without ever muddling the job. You have heard of the educated flea? He is a jumper, too. I could have made Bull count more than twenty, but I saw no reason for him to strain his voice, and besides, one does not pay anything extra for encores.

I would stow Bull away in my coat pocket and carry him to the Yarborough House, all the drug stores, and one or two liquor saloons, and take pleasure upon myself in giving free exhi-

bitions of Bull's ability as a mathematician. He had not been forced to learn the multiplication table before he could count correctly, for fear of stunting his brain. Assembling an audience, I would produce Bull from his parlor car, hold him on the palm of my left hand (I am right-handed) and begin the performance by saying, "Bull, count three." The answer would be, "Bloody-now, bloody-now, bloody-now!" Whatever number I told him to count, he would uncomplainingly and correctly do, and he could not be fooled by skipping about among the numbers. He would count just as well for anybody else in the audience, provided he remained in my hand. He was a jealous frog. He was a great joy to me, and gave much amusement to human beings of his acquaintance; and really, he knew at least two hundred people in Raleigh.

I fully proposed teaching Bull much more, so that he could get better acquainted with mankind; indeed, I had started him right so that he would know whether or not he was being cheated in the number of worms he traded for. He, of

course, needed no singing lessons, being a natural born noise-maker, and I was just on the point of teaching him the American or parrot language, when he died. After this affectionate relationship with a bull-frog, I could never again bring my stomach and conscience into sufficiently close friendship to eat frog legs.

I nearly forgot to tell how I persuaded that frog to count: Holding him, as stated, in the palm of my hand, every time I gently touched him underneath his throat he would say "Bull-lumb," and nobody could detect the movement of my finger.

Whether one captured in summer time would act so intelligently, or act at all, I leave to the reader to investigate.

Bull-frogs are killed at night by placing a lighted lantern in the bow of a small boat, and paddling very slowly and as silently as possible, close along the banks of ponds and rivers. They become interested in the light, indeed, are fascinated with it; will swim out to examine it, when, by a deft, flat smack with a paddle the frog may be stunned. However, it must be got

into the boat quickly, as otherwise it will sink, or recover and escape.

In the day time they may be shot with a small bore rifle, while sitting and philosophising in cool, shady, dark places along the banks; or else killed with frog-spears, made for the purpose.

I once caught a large one while fishing from the bank for bass. Having exhausted my minnow supply, without success, and it being nearly dark, I decided to try a lob of angle worms. I put several on the hook so that heads and tails could play well; but, getting no strike, lifted my hook to quit fishing, and when the bait reached the top of the water something wanted it bad. For several minutes I had the liveliest sort of a time, and when I landed my fish it was a great big bull-frog.

I am not so well acquainted with toad-frogs, although I have owned hundreds of them. They are also interesting and charming creatures, although their personal appearance is not inviting.

Everybody knows that they sing; it is only a croak when one is alone, like all other bachelors;

and the female has a softer voice than the male, otherwise, it is difficult to distinguish the boss from the servant. What person does not enjoy a camp meeting of frogs in the country on a hot summer night?

I have met with a great many toads in my rambles after turtles; because I found them to be *pate de foie gras* and caviar, too, for the turtle. In truth, I established a market for toads in the little town of Angier, N. C., where the boys would bring them to me in boxes, buckets and pockets; at so much per dozen. The market price would vary according to supply and demand. It is a mistake about toads causing warts —they do nothing of the kind, and are perfectly harmless.

I got over five hundred on hand at one time, and kept them together in a half-hogshead whence they escaped by linking together, like the play-soldiers at San Juan Hill. and sealing the side of the tub.

I could feed them all right on flies and worms; and it was as amusing to see them eat as it is to observe in awe a graduate of one of

our athletic colleges handle a knife at the dinner table.

I tried the frogs with shot and became convinced that the humorist unwittingly lied when he told the story about loading a frog with shot in order to win a race. The frog will not take lead. He cannot do so because of the shape of his tongue—the end of which is back-forked. He does not use his mouth to catch food, but only as a guard-house until the stomach is ready for the trial. In other words, the tongue acts as constable, the mouth is the jail, and the stomach is the judge and beneficiary. The frog's tongue is a very slender ligament about two inches in length, and is shaped like the pointed end of a fish-hook with the bard which brings the object home.

Covered with saliva, he darts this tongue out so quickly that the eye can hardly see it, hits a fly and runs him in; winks wisely and is ready for another fly. To be surrounded by a dozen toads, with worms wriggling and crippled flies hopping, is greater amusement than a revival affords, and is more entertaining than the best circus.

I spent more than two hours a day for a month, watching my frog subjects eat. They are cute creatures. I would catch a lot of horseflies, remove one wing, and taking several frogs, get down on the ground among them and turn a fly loose. A frog would notice the fly hopping, suddenly turn his head sideways and look at the fly with that eye, and then quickly turn the other eye upon the fly to verify the vision; make up his mind as a business proposition, put his tongue to work and in goes the fly. He hardly ever missed an opportunity. Of course, any stray fly that lit near enough would go the same way.

Then again, I would take a small angle worm, place it before a frog, and the same quick, comical shake of the head would mean good-bye worm. But whether the tongue alone brought the worm to the mouth I never did verify; yet, as soon as the worm got there the frog would take hold of it with both forefeet or hands and push it into his mouth, much like a squirrel sitting on its haunches eats a nut, or a gentleman gnaws green corn off a cob.

When I put out a big worm, the frog would

do his level best to get it into the guard-house, and would try again and again, only giving it up as a bad job after effort became hopeless.

The toad-frog is a harmless creature, traveling chiefly at night, or coming out of its hiding place after showers are over, in search of small insects. Doctors are thinking, one hundred years from now, of employing the frog in its own habitat, stagnant pools, to catch mosquitoes and other germ toters—an occupation the frog has been engaged in on its own account during the past 9,437 years, with no humanitarian purpose, possibly, yet for the stomach's sake.

During the summer the toad stays under cover in sunlight, and he goes into earth to spend the winter. It is enormously prolific, and while I have often wondered why so few reappear the next spring, yet like the house-fly, nature provides enough of them to keep the stock at or above par.

As I hinted, it is the best sort of a turtle bait, but I am now writing on the side of the frog. While the turtle is cruel, and has an awful grip, yet he is put here for some purpose; he kills and

eats more snakes than man kills, and yet the snake has a purpose here also—but I must stop.

The frog has no scales, and he is shaped somewhat different from his birth-mark or tadpole stage. It is born in water and takes in air through gills—fish-like.

CHAPTER XVII.

BAITS, ETC.

THE pot-bellied top-minnow, resembling the tadpole in action, is a worthless bait because it dies as soon as put on a hook; but it is plentiful in slow-running streams and stagnant pools near the coast, and is useful only for other fish to feed upon. It is one of the most interesting as well as worthless of the small fishes. It is a curiosity only because, like the shark, it brings forth its young alive—from thirty to forty at a time—and will devour its own young as soon as born. It, however, has several broods a year; is at home in swamps, rice ditches and sluggish creeks, where it catches mosquitoes and other insects.

* * *

The bowfin or grindle is also a permanent inhabitant of our sluggish and stagnant waters. It reaches a weight of twelve pounds, resembles a catfish somewhat, pulls like an eel, and is awfully voracious, and cruel, as well as being

totally unfit to eat. It is the most villainous-looking fish I ever saw.

* * *

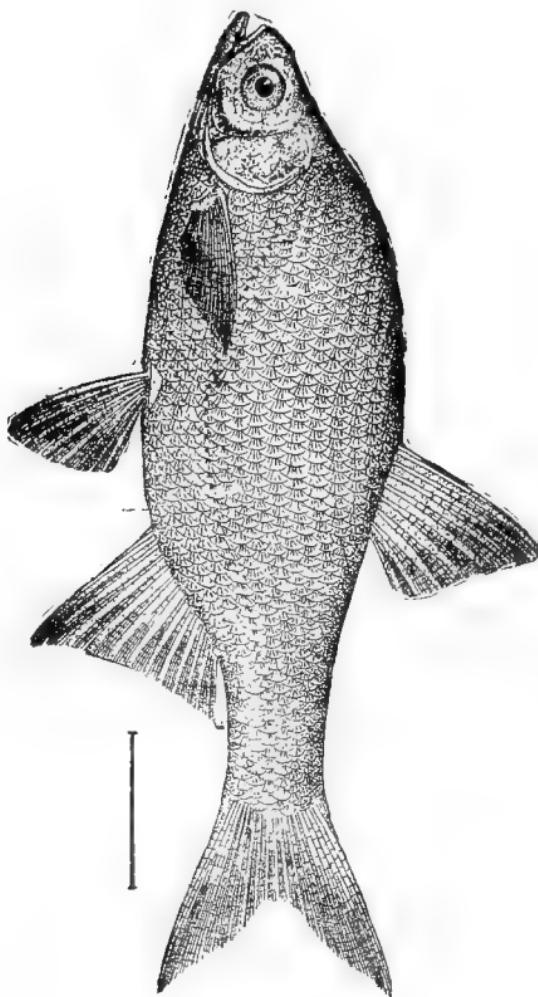
A very pretty and practical minnow or perch float is readily made of a goose quill cut off **an** inch in the feather and the line run through guides on each end of the float.

Remember, that the round-branch minnow is the very best bait for bass. The stone-roller is not a bait, because fish will not take it.

* * *

I merely suggest the following baits as appropriate for the different purposes, and important in the order given:

Roach.



BASS.

Round minnows.	Lob of angle worms.
Other minnows.	Grasshoppers.
Small pike.	Artificial flies.
Small catfish.	Artificial bugs.
Crawfish.	Buell spinner.
Frogs.	Buck-tail bob.

* * *

MOUNTAIN TROUT.

Artificial flies.	Grasshoppers.
	Angle worms.

* * *

PIKE AND JACK.

Minnows.	Frogs.
	Anything moving (alive or dead).

* * *

PERCH.

Small minnows.	Flat-head worms.
Grasshoppers.	Grub worms.
Peeled crawfish.	Angle worms.
Wasp maggots.	Cut fish.

CATFISH AND EELS.

Angle worms.	Grasshoppers.
Grub worms.	Anything.

* * *

SUCKERS.

Cornmeal dough mixed with cotton.	
	Angle worms.

* * *

TURTLE.

Live frogs and toads.	Dead fish or eel.
Dead frogs and toads.	Fowl.
Live minnows.	Flesh.
	Salt herring.

* * *

I am under obligations to Mr. H. T. Brimley, of the North Carolina State Museum, for valuable assistance given me in getting up this book. I also give thanks to the *Outing Magazine* for the use of the chapter on "Worm Fishing for Brook Trout," by Mr. Louis Rhead, which appeared in *Outing*, in 1906.

I have used, copiously, excerpts from that most excellent book entitled "The Fishes of North Carolina," by Dr. Hugh M. Smith, Deputy Commissioner of Fisheries, Washington, D. C. He kindly permitted me the use of the plates for the illustrations herein, as well as the material matter so freely selected from the aforesaid book.

* * *

There is as much reason why the youths of our country should learn as much as possible about fish life—food and fun—as there is that they should study birds, bugs, and botany, chiefly of interest to the rich and curious.

Encourage the innocent pastime of fishing in the boy's mind and save trouble. Manliness will come with the love of the sport; untouched by cruel thoughts.

And the longer a man lives the better he will love fishing, the more he will respect Nature, and, perhaps, mankind also.

[THE END.]

